



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600060101E







600060101E







FLORENCE AND FRANK.

ET ADENAE.

250. m. 278.



FLORENCE;
OR,
THE ORPHAN WARD.

BY
H. J. WOOD.



MONT ST. MICHEL.

LONDON:
ROUTLEDGE, WARNE, AND ROUTLEDGE,
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL.
NEW YORK: 129, GRAND STREET.

250. m. 278.



FLORENCE;

OR,

The Orphan Ward.

A TALE FOR YOUTH.

BY H. J. WOOD.

"How sweet it is the growth to trace
Of worth, of intellect, of grace,
In bosoms where our labours first
Bid the young seed of Spring-time burst,
And lead it on from hour to hour,
To ripen into perfect flower."

SIR JOHN BOWRING.

LONDON:
ROUTLEDGE, WARNE, AND ROUTLEDGE,

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL.

NEW YORK: 129, GRAND STREET.

1864.

LONDON :
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS,
CHANCERY STREET.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE ARRIVAL	1
II. THE ACCIDENT	21
III. THE VISIT TO NORMANDY.	38
IV. AVRANCHES	49
V. AVRANCHES FAIR AND THE VISIT TO LA GARAYE	69
VI. BAYEUX	88
VII. THE RETURN HOME.	98
VIII. THE YEAR'S TRIAL	123
IX. THE COMING OF AGE	131
X. THE BEGINNING OF THE END	139
POSTSCRIPT	143



FLORENCE ;

OR,

THE ORPHAN WARD.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARRIVAL

THE children of Mr. and Mrs. Bentley were watching the return of their parents very anxiously and impatiently, even more so than usual, as they had been absent for a week on a journey to Yorkshire, to fetch a young orphan niece, who was henceforward to live with them at Heathfield, and their home was to be her home. At five o'clock the carriage had been sent to the station to meet the travellers, and it was now time that it should return. "They must have lost the train," was the sentence pronounced by the three expectants ; and as it would be an hour before the next train could

arrive, Frank, the eldest of the party, wisely suggested that they should find something to do to make the time appear shorter. He proposed playing a game of chess with Albert ; and sister Emily, after taking another look along the road, sat down to read, and all were determined to be patient and quiet until they heard the carriage wheels.

The orphan cousin, who was coming, was, like Emily Bentley, about twelve years old, and she had lost her mother when she was six years of age, and from that time she had been the sole object of her father's care. He earnestly wished that she should be gentle and refined like her mother ; but as his dear wife had always been an invalid Mr. Wreford considered ill-health the great evil to be avoided in the education of his only child, and therefore everything was secondary to the best means of making his little Florence strong in body and in mind. Her book-learning was directed by her father and her good nurse, but study was reserved for rainy days only. When the sun shone, this much-

fostered child was to be always out of doors, riding, driving, or running about with her dogs, or busy in the farm-yard with young calves, little pigs, and poultry, or working in her flower-garden. The early loss of his wife had made the fond father unreasonably fearful of putting any restraint on his child, hence she became, as her nurse said, "as wild as a young colt."

Florence Wreford, though deprived of youthful companions, had, however, the advantage of her father's unremitting care and companionship, and though quite ignorant of girls' pursuits, she had read a great many good books before she was twelve years old ; her father had taught her a little Latin and a great deal of arithmetic, and her mind was strengthened by his teachings. Her active country life made her brave and fearless—fearless even to rashness ; and, except towards her father, she was deficient in reverence and obedience, which, as we shall see, made her aunt, Mrs. Bentley, rather fearful of the charge which by the terms of her brother's will had devolved upon her.

He had bequeathed his daughter to her care, with a strict injunction, that her ward should be kept in ignorance for some years of her future great wealth, that she should be educated in all respects like her cousin Emily, and be taught especially to find her happiness in doing good.

A most ample allowance was made for the maintenance of this child and the nurse who had stood in the place of a mother to her. It was also provided that Mr. and Mrs. Bentley's daughter should enjoy in common with her cousin every advantage in education that money could procure.

The game of chess was ended when the travellers drove up, and they were soon greeted in the hall by Frank, and Albert, and Emily. They and their cousin Florence shook hands in a shy, awkward manner at first ; the stranger being naturally sad from her recent loss, and some anxiety about her new home, but she did not seem so dull as her cousins expected to find her. They did not know then that she had been

weaned from her father's society and his love for many long months, as in his too anxious care for her health he would not allow her to remain in his sick room.

The long journey, too, from Kirkdale presented great interest to one who had never before been ten miles from home. The reviving influence of change of scene is felt by the old, and much more so by the young! Thoughts crowded into the mind of the young girl, on her arrival at Heathfield, respecting the very different kind of life she must expect to lead in her new home; but there was something cheering in the idea of finding there companions of her own age, who seemed so delighted and happy at having their papa and mamma at home again. At length Florence ventured to look round the room, and took courage to say to Emily, "that Morris, her nurse, was not coming until to-morrow, and that she hoped she would arrive safely."

The late meal was taken by the new comer in silence, and she seemed glad when bed-time

arrived, and in spite of her anxiety she slept well. No sooner was she awake than she arose and went to the window to see, as she said to herself, "what Heathfield was like." Her arrival had been in the dusk of the evening, therefore she had seen none of its surroundings. She now beheld a beautiful garden, with terraces and sloping lawns near the house, vases of flowers at the corners of parapets, and a stream through the garden, over which was a rustic bridge ; high trees on each side of the grounds, and through an opening a view of a wide heath and distant hills.

Heathfield was situated in a picturesque part of Berkshire ; and had Florence been older she would have thought how lovely a view it was ; but it must be owned that she only thought how nice it would be to walk on the low walls, and what fun to fish in the stream ; and well satisfied with her inspection, she returned to her bed, and waited patiently for her cousin Emily, who had promised, in the absence of Morris, to help her to unpack and dress.

The dressing completed, the cousins went to the library to join the early service ; and when Mr. Bentley invoked a blessing on the again united family, and Florence joined her voice to theirs, and hallowed the holy name of the Giver of all good, she felt, young as she was, that she belonged to the family, and was no longer quite an orphan.

After breakfast, Emily proposed a walk in the garden with her cousin ; and this over, she showed her all her little treasures—her cabinet of neatly - arranged shells and minerals, and specimens of curious seed vessels and sea-weeds.

But even wings of flying-fish and snake-nuts, and vegetable ivory-nuts, and nuggets of gold did not interest Florence, and she seemed relieved when Emily said that her brothers were now at leisure, and they would take her to the poultry-yard and stables to see their ponies and their dogs. The ponies delighted her, and she owned that Shag, her own Shetland pony, was not so pretty as Frisk and Bobby. She told the boys that she had four dogs at Kirkdale,

but that her uncle wished to have only two come to Heathfield, Puff and Rover—a house-dog and a terrier.

Morris arrived in the evening, and was most affectionately greeted by her nurse-child, who soon began to pat and fondle her dogs as if she had not seen them for a week, and indeed the long journey, the meeting her cousins, and her new home, made her feel as if two days had been seven.

The next morning, when Mrs. Bentley went to show nurse Morris the arrangement for her niece's comfort in her rooms, she encouraged the faithful nurse in a long talk. It was important that Mrs. Bentley should know all the good and bad habits of her young charge, in order to encourage the one and repress the other. Morris desired no better than to talk of her own darling, and she owned that she was a very peculiar child, and very hard to manage. "You see, ma'am," said the nurse, "master would never let her be refused anything but what was bad for her health. After my mis-

tress's death, he was very melancholy, and never quite recovered the shock of his sudden loss. It is now six years ago that it happened, and we never expected him to live so long. He saw no one but his little daughter, and he let her do whatever she liked. It was one person's work to mend her clothes, and to see that she did not do a mischief to herself. Though I must not forget to say, ma'am, that my good master always taught her her duty to God and her neighbour; and I may say, too, of Miss Florence, that a more kind-hearted young lady never lived; and she is always true and brave, and more like a boy than a girl—for she was always putting us in a fright by climbing trees, and riding over hedges without rhyme or reason. When she was only eight years old we lost her one whole day. She was missed soon after breakfast, when master had gone out riding; upstairs and downstairs we looked for her—in the barn, in the stables, in the hay-loft, the tool-house, the apple-room—all in vain. No Miss Florence! Then the gardener

said that he would drag the pond. Our very hearts sank within us, lest master should come home, and his darling not found. We could not eat a bit of dinner! Time went on, and it was nigh upon five o'clock when cook, wanting something out of the store-room, she unlocked the door—and lo and behold! there was Miss Florence seated on a stool stoning of raisins! She laughed right out at the idea of having 'made us all play hide-and-seek,' as she said, 'all day long.' I own to having said very sharp things to my young miss. I declared 'that she had no right to make us so miserable all the day, just for her fun!' She then told us that she had gone into the store-room to get an apple, when she heard some one go by, and lock the door; and then the notion came into her head to spend the day there; and she thought that she could dine off biscuits and apples and plums, which would be nicer than meat and potatoes. Then, by way of having something to do, she set about peeling apples and stoning raisins; and then she amused

herself by taking out all the best china, and dusting it, and setting out a dinner by making pretty tarts with cakes and marmalade, and preserves and potted meats for the first course ; in fact, whilst we were fretting ourselves, Miss Florence was amusing herself uncommonly ! When master came home, she told him all that had happened, and she owned to him that she was sorry that she had frightened us—for, as I said before, she was very kind-hearted ; but, just to let you know, ma'am, how very indulgent Mr. Wreford was, when she showed him her grand set-out of a dinner, he actually laughed—a thing I had not seen him do for two years. I must allow, too, that with the best china and glass and plate the table looked very pretty indeed !”

This remarkable event was evidently a favourite topic of Morris's, which Mrs. Bentley was compelled at last to cut short. It was, however, sufficient to show her, that with much that was good in her young niece there was also much that was wilful and wayward ; just, indeed,

what might have been expected from a much-indulged and only child. She felt that the care of her niece would be a source of anxiety, but from this she would not shrink ; indeed, she had no choice. Of the trustees and guardians left by her brother, Mr. and Mrs. Bentley were those appointed to have the care of his daughter, until she should attain the age of eighteen. After attaining that age, she was herself to determine with whom she would reside.

Before three days were over, the cousins became very friendly and familiar, and from this time forth Florence felt herself at home, and at ease ; and hence she resumed her former habits. Sometimes she was seen walking on the narrow stone parapets, swaying about as each foot was placed before the other ; or she might be seen taking flying leaps over the flower-beds ; or a tempting ladder against a hay-rick enabled her to mount to the top of it ; and before she had been many weeks at Heathfield, she had climbed every tree in the orchard, daring her boy-

cousins to follow her; and though both were older than herself they joined willingly in her sports, and they truly enjoyed her company in their rides. She was an untiring and fearless little horsewoman, and she made Shag keep up with their ponies, and leap any ordinary ditch or dyke on the common, and no distance ever wearied her.

Emily Bentley had been a very delicate child, and consequently seldom joined her brothers in their excursions; but, though gentle, she was brave, and those brothers tenderly loved "Sister Milly," and they thought her very near perfection.

Before the business of regular instruction began, Mr. and Mrs. Bentley thought it essential that their young niece should see "something of the world," as the phrase is, her previous life having been, as regarded society, that of a mere rustic. She had never even met any of her relatives.

Her father, Mr. Wreford, had never quite forgiven his sister for leaving him, an old

bachelor, to marry Mr. Bentley, and settle in the South; and though he, too, afterwards married, his life and habits were still those of a reserved, unsocial man. Florence had never seen more people assembled than the congregation of a small village church. She had never seen a town, nor ever witnessed any kind of social gathering in her father's house. It therefore seemed a necessary part of her education that she should see more of her fellow-creatures, and learn how they lived and acted. Young people of the present day are so familiar with their parents' friends and acquaintances they can scarcely imagine how shy and unsocial Florence felt when any strangers came to Heathfield.

Frank, who loved a joke, declared that his cousin must go through a Course of Civilization; and this being vacation time it proved a most agreeable occupation for them all to visit Windsor, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, and the Crystal Palace, and the cousins quite enjoyed Florence's quaint remarks on all they

saw; but the sight and sounds of great numbers were oppressive to her, and she could never during her life hear a multitude of voices, or see a crowd, without great emotion. She was much interested in the pictures and statues of great men of whom she had read, and also in the tombs of Kings and Queens with whose history she was familiar.

She no longer appeared the "Country Cousin." She was looked up to by her companions, and she seemed to become older, as she could understand and appreciate the noble actions of great heroes.

Mrs. Bentley proceeded very gradually with the instruction of her ward in such accomplishments as required close attention or regular practice, lest they should be too great a restraint, and irksome to her.

In a few months, however, by joining classes with other young people, she desired to equal them, and her success in dancing and singing induced her to persevere in what gave her more trouble—French and German; and she had the

advantage of a good example in her well-taught and persevering cousin Emily. Florence had learned by degrees to conform to the regular habits of the family, as her aunt had convinced her unselfish, though wayward niece, that by this means she would relieve her friends from much anxiety; but the independent life she had led as a child made her often act from the impulse of the moment contrary to the warnings of her friends, though sometimes she excited their wonder and admiration by her courage and humanity. 4'

A few months after the arrival of Florence at Heathfield, when Frank and Albert had returned to college, Mrs. Bentley and Emily were quietly seated at work and talking of her, and regretting that she had never been taught needle-work as a rest and recreation after walking, or reading, or "practising." Her father had resisted Morris's wishes on this head, as it was "a sedentary occupation, and needless." Suddenly a voice was heard calling out loudly—"Help! help! Morris! Morris! Quick! quick!" Mother

and daughter ran to the garden from whence the voice proceeded, and there they beheld Florence half-carrying, half-dragging Willy Brown, the gardener's child, dripping with water and covered with duckweed and slime. The poor boy, still roaring with fright, was soon brought into the house by Morris, who had first heard the cry for help from the well-known voice.

When Florence had gained breath enough, she told her aunt that "Willy had gone to the field-pond, and had walked straight into it, for as it was covered all over with green, he did not know that it was a pond, and he would have been drowned if she had not jumped in and pulled him out! Poor Willy is dreadfully frightened, but I do not think that he is hurt," said Florence, speaking as if she did not think that she had done anything extraordinary.

Mrs. Bentley sent for the gardener to take his boy home, as they had no clothes to fit him, and whilst still sobbing, he was well

wrapped up and carried to the lodge by his father, who was full of gratitude to Miss Florence for what she had done. Mrs. Bentley and Morris entreated the young heroine to go to a warm bed for a few hours, though she assured them she never caught cold.

The next day Mrs. Bentley could not refrain from warning her niece against such risks as plunging into a pond of which she knew not the depth ; “ You—both of you—might have been drowned.”

In her justification, she said—

“ I could not help it, dear aunt ; Willy would have been drowned before I could have fetched his father. I am glad that I saved Willy’s life—are not you, dear aunt ?”

It was impossible for the good aunt not to be pleased with her niece’s courage and self-forgetfulness and presence of mind ; but she trembled at her boldness, lest on some such occasion she should endanger a life of so much promise, and one that Mrs. Bentley felt was in her especial charge ; but this feeling she could not confess,

nor could she explain to the object of it, why she trembled at her recklessness, nor why her life seemed more important than that of the gardener's child. It was a feeling that good Mrs. Bentley did not like to own even to herself.

"There is one thing certain, dear Florence," she said, "that though Willy Brown is only four years old, he is not likely to walk into the pond again for you to pull him out; and, if I am not grateful to you, I am sure that you will have the heartfelt gratitude of Willy's father and mother."

Whilst this exploit made her aunt and uncle anxious, it impressed on the minds of her cousins a firm belief in Florence's self-forgetfulness and bravery, and they henceforward looked upon her as a kind of heroine. The servants admired and respected her for having saved Willy Brown's life, and they no longer spoke of her as a mere romp and "Tomboy."

This adventure formed the principal subject of Emily's next letter to her brothers, who, in

return, made kind inquiries after "Florry's *protégé*, Duckweed Brown," and the "new member of the Humane Society—*who deserved a medal!*"



FLORENCE THE ORPHAN.

From



CHAPTER II.

THE ACCIDENT.

It was a more difficult part of Mrs. Bentley's duty to repress her niece's kind and generous, but rash impulses, than perhaps any other duty. From her never having seen any cases of want or extreme poverty at Kirkdale she would have emptied her purse to clothe and feed every poor person she encountered in her walks. To check this and counsel prudence seemed like planting selfishness in a generous soil ; but in time she was able to make Florence understand why she should not reward the idle, but endeavour to find out where she could be really useful. She became greatly interested in Mrs. Bentley's and Emily's pensioners, which gave her, too, the kind of active occupation that she loved ; and thus two years passed on, in which

Florence improved in mind and character, and her friends thought her early failings had quite disappeared.

Her aunt had been so long accustomed to a ready obedience from her children, that she had only to express her objection to any scheme of theirs, and assign her reasons for it, that she often forgot that her young charge required a constant reminder of her daily duty towards the comfort of others ; but hitherto no greater evil had occurred than that Florence had forgotten the dinner hour, or that she came home wet through by remaining out in a storm, and consequently was laid up with a severe cold. One day, however, when Mrs. Bentley was seated at work, Florence suddenly threw down her book, and declared that she would go out for a ride. It was a bright tempting winter's morning, certainly, but neither her uncle nor her cousins were at home, which caused her aunt to say—

“I would rather that you did not ride to-day, Florence ; but if you particularly wish to

do so, you must have the groom with you ; and remember that the hounds are to be thrown off at twelve o'clock, and the 'meet' is at Drayton Down, so you must avoid riding in that direction entirely."

Now, Florence was bent on going out on account of this very "meet." She had often been with her father to a hunt in Yorkshire, and she had a strong desire to see one in the South of England ; but this wish she kept to herself. She ordered the groom to ride Shag, and put her saddle upon Frisk, her cousin Frank's pony. She had always seen it docile and never restive with her cousin, and of course she feared nothing—indeed, she never did. She had, however, no sooner mounted, than she found that Frisk had not been trained for a lady's riding, and she had scarcely crossed the heath before a huntsman passed her, which set her pony off in a canter. Excited still more by the flapping of her riding-habit, to which he was unaccustomed, he soon began to gallop, and when his rider held him in he reared so much

that she was obliged to give him his head. On he went after the red coats at full gallop towards Drayton. The pony was evidently running away and would soon rush into the full field. Riders now checked their speed in order not to excite still more the runaway pony. "Keep your seat! Keep your seat!" was heard from many voices as the young girl passed on. She was fearless in ordinary cases, but she now suddenly remembered that she was doing the very thing that her good aunt had warned her not to do; in fact that she had begged her to ride in an opposite direction. Then she felt as if she were breaking her word to her kind and indulgent aunt—her second mother! Unable to check her speed, after a mile of breathless anxiety—in a moment of desperation she resolved to throw herself off rather than rush into the midst of the assembled crowd of horsemen. Seeing a bank of earth on her left, she slipped her foot out of the stirrup and threw herself on the ground.

A piercing shriek was heard!—the rash, fear-

less girl had broken her ankle ; and when the groom came up, his young mistress was suffering great agony. A gentleman kindly returned to her assistance ; she told the servant to go back as fast as possible to the young lady's home, to procure a carriage and inform her friends of her accident. He said—

“Tell them that I will procure a surgeon, as I know that there is one on the field.”

Amongst the stragglers who had come to see the hounds thrown off were Mrs. Brown and Willy. She no sooner saw what had happened to “Dear Miss Florence,” than she sent Willy off “as fast as his legs could carry him” with a message to Heathfield, whilst she waited on the sufferer. She obtained some water from a neighbouring cottage and bathed the face and hands of Florence to revive her from her faintness. The good, grateful woman could not forbear telling the bystanders “what a dear, kind, brave young lady she was, and how she had jumped into a pond to save her Willy's life.”

The groom galloped fast to Heathfield, and

Mrs. Bentley, Morris, and Emily were not long in coming, though to the sufferer every minute seemed an hour. She bore her pain courageously, and owned her fault to her aunt, making no excuse for what had happened, and bravely concealing the fact that she had thrown herself off in order to avoid rushing in amongst the hounds and huntsmen. Morris wondered much "how her darling Miss Florence could have fallen off; she never knew such a thing to happen before."

A mattress had been brought in a little low carriage, into which Florence was raised by slings, assisted by the surgeon, and thus the pain of her removal was rendered as endurable as possible. No groan escaped her, though when cousin Emily kissed her parched lips she saw the cold perspiration on her forehead.

Days, weeks, and months passed before Florence could leave her room, as her right ankle was sprained, in addition to the broken bone of the left. When she was able to be moved on to a sofa, her aunt and cousin read

and worked by her side. One day the invalid surprised Emily by asking her "if she would be so good as to teach her needlework?" A request most readily complied with, and this new accomplishment became a great resource in these days of confinement to one room. To encourage her, Mrs. Bentley told her niece that the great Dr. Johnson had said "that a woman was happier than a man because she could hem a pocket-handkerchief!"

Emily's pupil was very awkward at first. She pricked her fingers with the needle, and caught up bits of skin, and in a fit of impatience "she wished that everybody in England had one of the American sewing machines."

"But," replied her aunt, "you would not then enjoy the pleasure that you have been talking of, in hemming handkerchiefs and making nightcaps for Morris with your own hands whilst we are reading aloud to you, if a machine made them; besides, a sewing machine requires moving with the foot, which you could not do now."

“ Well, that’s very true,” said the now patient girl; “ therefore *will* I persevere.”

Florence found that she had to learn hemming, sewing, stitching, felling, running, over-casting, tacking, herring-boning, and whipping! Even the names amused her—especially the last two; but when Emily told her that these names were only those of “ plain work,” and that she must learn knitting and netting, crochet and tatting, and cross-stitch, and tent-stitch, and *frivolité*, in order to be like a young lady, Florence groaned and sighed, as if she wished to be like a boy again! In time, however, she began to like employing her fingers; for, as she expressed it, “ she could think about whatever she liked whilst she was at work—she could think her own thoughts; but when she was reading she was obliged to think about what the book said.”

With the usual impatience of a young beginner Florence was anxious to be provided with “ *tools*,” as she called them, and she begged her aunt to send to Reading for a

work-box, six lawn handkerchiefs for Morris, and three handsome silk handkerchiefs for her uncle and cousins. Emily suggested the possibility of her not succeeding, or her not continuing to like the accomplishment of needle-work; but Florence replied, "that if she failed, she would give her work-box to Morris, with the work to finish. Besides, I must have tools to find fault with, and lay the blame upon them for my own awkwardness."

Her aunt and cousin read many choice books aloud to the invalid, and by her remarks upon them she proved that her father had sown good seeds in her mind, and that they had fallen upon good ground. Mrs. Bentley felt that much benefit might arise from this enforced quiet—this "seeming evil" arising from the accident.

One day, when alone with her aunt, Florence ventured to ask her "if she thought that her misfortune was a punishment for her disobedience—her misconduct?"

"Certainly, my dear, it was," replied Mrs.

Bentley. "We never transgress any laws, divine or human, established for the health of body or mind, without suffering sooner or later; and whether we benefit by such experience or not, makes the wisdom or folly of our characters. I hope you will improve by your painful experience—that thus out of a small present evil a great future good will arise."

After a pause Florence said—

"Indeed, aunt, I really wish to be wise and good, and besides that, I hope some day to be able to do good—dear papa wished it so much."

The boys' vacation-time came, when both Frank and Albert tried to amuse and help their cousin. They contrived for her a kind of sedan to carry her downstairs, "making her look like a Guy Fawkes," as she said. In a short time she could be placed in a perambulator and wheeled round the grounds; then came drives in a carriage, and in process of time the trial of standing and walking with two kind arms for crutches.

The handkerchiefs were duly finished and presented, as Florence said, "with the greatest conceit and ostentation on her part." Mr. Bentley thanked his niece for her useful present. Frank said "he was sorry that her gift should ever be sneezed at;" then he looked very attentively at the work, and said jocosely, "All right! I was afraid that I might get my nose entangled in the stitches!" which Florence declared was a most insulting remark, doubting not only her skill but that of her teacher—his own Emily. At this accusation, Frank kissed his handkerchief, and then boasted of his gallantry!

Mrs. Bentley's friends and acquaintances had condoled with her after her niece's accident, and shook their heads and talked of the "heavy charge" imposed upon her in the care of "so rash a young lady." Mrs. Bentley replied, "that she *had* a serious responsibility, perhaps more so than any stranger could surmise. But," she added, "that her niece had many noble qualities with few failings, and those failings arose from the independent life she had led in

her childhood, which made her reckless and wayward; but she was neither deceitful nor headstrong; and, in fact, she had in her the materials of a superior character." In spite of all this, friends still shook their wise heads.

Mrs. Bentley's responsibility *was* very great, for her brother had placed all his large property and his estates in trust, until his daughter should come of age, and in case of her dying before she reached twenty-one, the whole of the wealth was bequeathed to Mrs. Bentley absolutely, as his sole remaining relative. This arrangement was very gratifying to his excellent sister, but it made her nervously anxious about her niece's well-being, and fearful of the risks she so heedlessly ran; but it was only indirectly that she could impress on her mind a due regard to self-preservation.

Florence recovered her health slowly but securely, and the result of the severe fracture was a slight but permanent lameness, which for some years prevented long walks and horse-riding, and this restraint made her more

prudent and studious. In the following year after the painful occurrence at Drayton, when all the family were assembled one evening, Mr. Bentley gravely announced to them that he was compelled to leave England for some months in order to settle some business of importance—in fact, that he was going as far as Malaga. He said that he could defer this journey until the time of Frank and Albert's college vacation, so they would have plenty of time to prepare enough French to help them on their journey, as a plan had been arranged for them to travel also. As Mr. Bentley was much beloved in his family, they all expressed a wish to accompany him, but this he said was impossible. He then told them that he and Mrs. Bentley had devised a scheme that would be both useful and agreeable to them all, and perhaps make their separation appear shorter. It was settled that they should spend the summer at Avranches, in Normandy, where his friend the Rev. Mr. Stanley resided as British chaplain. Frank and Albert were to read with him, and they would all be able to gain

colloquial French there, with advantage. Mr. and Mrs. Bentley considered Avranches one of the most interesting towns in France, not only from its being beautifully situated, but from the many attractions it offers to visitors. Though sorry to separate from Mr. Bentley, the young people soon began to talk of nothing else but going abroad, and to look upon the change as very pleasurable ; and Mrs. Bentley thought it would shorten her husband's absence to have new scenes to visit, and fresh occupation to interest her. They had still a few months for preparation, and for Florence's complete amendment, before the time fixed for their departure, and Mr. Bentley advised the reading of some work concerning Normandy and Brittany, and their connexion with English history, as by doing so they would have double interest in visiting renowned places.

Their route was to be by Newhaven and Dieppe, and Frank and Albert were then to assume the responsible duties which their father had hitherto performed on their journeys. They felt quite proud and manly at their appoint-

ment, and Frank enjoined implicit obedience and punctuality from his cousin Florence, "lest she might fall overboard or be left behind," which speech "she thought very impertinent on Frank's part, as she had begun to be careful and prudent since her accident;" but she promised to obey her uncle's deputy very dutifully.

As Morris was to accompany the party, Florence would have in her an experienced and thoughtful guide to help her in all ordinary difficulties, at sea or on land.

The first that presented itself was, what was to be taken and what was to be left at home. It seemed a great grievance to the little country lady to leave dogs and ponies behind, as she had always considered them necessary belongings. She was, however, soon convinced that they would give more trouble than pleasure.

The necessity for passports* seemed so strange and foreign to the young party, that they began to think their movements would be watched by the police, and that they should be under the

* They were abolished in 1861.

care of prefects, and consuls, and the English ambassador, and Lord Clarendon, and therefore that they should feel older and more responsible than when in England.

The appointed day of departure at length arrived ; bag and baggage all in order, and labelled for "Dieppe, *viâ* Newhaven."

As the hour of separation drew near, the young group became subdued and silent—all the previous excitement was over and gone. Mrs. Bentley much regretted that her husband could not see them safe across the Channel, but it was necessary that he should go by sea to Gibraltar to confer with some agent there. On their way to Newhaven, the young travellers began to enumerate the remarkable things that they should see in France, vineyards and apple-trees growing by the road-side especially ; and they were rather disappointed to find that they were not going far enough South for vineyards. Mrs. Bentley said that she had seen some on the banks of the Seine, but neither the vineyards of France nor those of Germany were

so picturesque as English hop-gardens ; they were more like trees trained on low espaliers, though their fragrance, when in blossom, far surpassed the scent of hops.

Nothing could be more convenient or easy than the embarkation at Newhaven—it seemed merely walking off a platform on land to a platform on the sea. No question of berths or cabins, for the sea looked like a peaceful lake, and all idea of danger or fear was banished from the travellers' minds. It was the first time that Florence had seen the sea, and its grandeur, even in its calmness, made a deep impression on her mind, and rendered her silent and thoughtful.

CHAPTER III.

THE VISIT TO NORMANDY.

AFTER a smooth passage of eight hours, the travellers arrived safely at Dieppe. Frank being fresh from "Cæsar's Commentaries," took occasion to tell Albert that it is supposed that Dieppe was the port from which Cæsar sailed with his legions for the conquest of England; but this fact is not yet established beyond dispute. As the steam-packet approached the pier, they looked eagerly for French faces, and listened for French sounds; but there were so many English residents in Dieppe, come to see or meet their fellow-countrymen land, and so many English waiters, who put themselves forward to secure customers for their respective hotels, that the fresh arrival



were quite disappointed at not feeling themselves all at once in a foreign country.

Frank and Albert had not many difficulties to contend with on their landing, as they found a carriage ready to convey them to a good hotel opposite the sea. They were therefore able to take a stroll upon the beach before dark, and to visit what is called *L'Établissement*, and hear a good band. The whole party retired early, that they might rise in time to see something of Dieppe before they began their journey to Caen, which was to be their next resting-place.

Soon after breakfast they visited the markets, in order to see the picturesque country-people. The first thing, however, which claimed their attention in the fish-market was a large kettle containing red-hot charcoal on which a number of small crabs were writhing and crawling, and which a girl was watching with calm interest and attention. When she was asked by Emily "how she could be so cruel as to roast them alive?" the girl simply replied, "*Bonnes à*

manger, mademoiselle ;" and to all the remonstrances of the whole party no other reply was made than that they were "*bonnes à manger*."* Florence was quite outrageous at this inhumanity, and she decided "that the French were a most cruel and wicked nation, and that such a horrible custom would not be permitted in England!" A hasty judgment, and only excusable in the young and ignorant ; and Mrs. Bentley reminded her that she knew nothing of what went on in English fish-markets. At the same time she consented to the general wish of her children and her niece, that they might buy both the crabs and the old fish-kettle, and the boys quite enjoyed carrying it between them to the harbour, which was close by, and turning crabs, kettle, and hot charcoal into the sea!—to the great amusement of the bystanders, who thought the English a very "*drôle*" people, and very rich they must be, to be so wasteful !

The strangers next visited the shops where

* Good to eat.

the carved ivory is sold for which Dieppe is so famous, and they saw some beautiful designs for brooches, crosses, crucifixes, &c., of which they made a few purchases. They were advised at their hotel to visit the *Chateau d'Eu*, about eighteen miles from Dieppe, as it was the private residence of Louis Philippe when king of the French, and where he entertained our then youthful Queen Victoria. It is a small, well-wooded estate near Tréport, a pretty little seaport, from whence Louis Philippe fled to England under the name of Mr. William Smith. Mrs. Bentley did not feel disposed to diverge at their outset from their route towards Avranches, even to visit this place, though of historic interest.

The journey was pursued that day to Caen, where they took a passing glimpse of this fine old city and its remarkable Gothic church, and of two abbeys erected in the time of William the Conqueror. They were nearly destroyed in the Revolution of 1792, and have since been used as barns; but they were now in progress of restoration to their former splendour by the

Emperor. One, called St. Stephen's, or *L'Abbaye aux Hommes*, was commenced by the Duke of Normandy in 1066, in gratitude for his victory at Hastings, and dedicated eleven years afterwards. The other was named "*La Trinité*," or "*L'Abbaye aux Dames*," and both display fine specimens of the early round arch of the Normans.

At Caen they took leave of railways, and it was necessary that they should avail themselves of a "diligence"—an old-fashioned, rough vehicle of the coach kind, which, in spite of its name, was a very slow conveyance; but a less rapid rate of progress enabled them to see the country better.

The boys were much interested in the great variety of crops in Normandy, many of which were quite unknown to them; but Mrs. Bentley, who had travelled this route before, knew them all by sight. Buckwheat—called *sarrasin* by the French—and hemp, and flax, and maize were novelties to the young people. Large stacks of what looked like coarse grey hair,

Mrs. Bentley told them was a kind of colewort, or, as the French call it, "*Colza*, or *chou à faucher*."* It is useful in many different states as manure and fodder, but principally for the oil extracted from it, called "*Colza*," now extensively used in lamps. It has no head or heart, like our ordinary garden cabbage; the stems are two or three feet high, with sessile, heart-shaped leaves, and it bears white or yellow flowers. It forms a valuable source of profit to the Norman farmers.

This neighbourhood also produces large quantities of tobacco, and there are large manufactories of cigars in Normandy. Frank then remembered having seen groups of young women at Dieppe, who had come, he was told, from a cigar dépôt where eight hundred persons are employed in making cigars for home and foreign consumption. The growth of tobacco for sale is prohibited in England, and even in private gardens only a small patch is allowed to be planted: it was permitted to be grown in

* Cabbage for mowing.

Ireland until 1832. This prohibition is made in order to secure to our revenue the tax or duty on imported tobacco from Virginia and elsewhere.

They passed on their journey many interesting and picturesque towns, which were to be visited at a future time—Mrs. Bentley being anxious to reach Avranches—her temporary home—to deposit the great quantity of luggage requisite for a residence of some months; Bayeux and its celebrated tapestry also being reserved as an especial object for a leisurely visit.

Avranches stands on a kind of table-land, reached by a long ascent from a rich plain, and when the travellers were within a few miles of the town they could see the sea, and looming in the distant horizon what appeared to be a large ship in full sail. Great was the surprise of the young people when they were informed by a fellow-traveller that it was no ship, but the celebrated Mont St. Michel—a fortress on a rock in the sea, with some hundreds of inhabitants. The small island they now saw near it

was "Tombelaine," which their informant, an abbé, said ought to be called "*Tombe-Hélène*," a young lady having lived there in solitude and despair until she died. A less romantic origin for the name has been given by historians. A longing desire to see their new home now possessed them all, and each formed a different notion of what the house on the *Roche-plate* would be. On reaching the coach-office at Avranches, a commissionaire or porter offered to conduct them to their abode, and to which they must walk, whilst their luggage would be conveyed on a truck.

Hitherto Frank had been very successful in his new office, and with his knowledge of French, and "his small amount of French talk," he had got on wonderfully well without having to appeal to his mother for assistance; but alas! the disposal of the luggage and the demands made by the clerk at the office quite embarrassed and bewildered him.

"What can the man mean, mamma? I am puzzled. The clerk says, 'because we have an

excellent baggage we must pay for *See Kilee*,* which weigh *Neu kilo*†—at least, it sounds so."

Mrs. Bentley could not forbear smiling at the difficulty as she replied, "*Excellent*" means 'exceeding,' over-weight in this case. 'Six colis,' or six packages, which weigh nine kilogrammes,‡ for which we must pay, being beyond our allowance. You may give him what he asks—it is a fair demand."

Frank had hoped, as he said, to have completed the journey "on his own hook," without having recourse "to his mother's stock of French."

Their house on the "Roche-plate" was all that could be desired by young and old—a nice garden, a fine view, and good rooms.

The next morning, when Mrs. Bentley and Morris were unpacking and arranging the wardrobes, the young people sallied forth to explore the town, and find out the post-office. They

* Six colis.

† Neuf kilos.

‡ A kilogramme, 2 lbs. 3 oz. 3 dwts.

were wondering on their way what would be their first difficulty or puzzle, when they beheld at a distance, "CONFECTION POUR LES HOMMES" painted on the side of a house in large black letters on a white ground. They all agreed that it must be a large *confectioner's*, and they hurried on in order to buy *bon-bons*. To their great surprise and disappointment they found it a shop for ready-made clothes—a tailor's! They therefore decided that for the future they would not draw hasty conclusions from their very small knowledge of French.

Avranches is neither large nor intricate, therefore they wandered safely on through the principal street until they reached the Botanic Garden, to which they had been directed. Mont St. Michel and the sea are seen from hence through a fine Gothic arch, which they were told was formerly the portal of an abbey at Bouilleteon, destroyed at the time of the Revolution. This gate was removed by some antiquary and placed here as a sacred relic.

Frank longed to fetch his mother to see this lovely view ; but it was time that they should all return, as a joint letter was to be written to Mr. Bentley, to announce their safe arrival at Avranches.



ROADSIDE CROSSES.



DINAN.



NORMAN CAPS.



CHAPTER IV.

AVRANCHES.

SMALL as the town of Avranches now is, it was a very important place eight hundred years ago, and William d'Avranches was one of the good knights who accompanied the Duke of Normandy when he set forth to conquer England. Its fine cathedral and all the public buildings were destroyed in the Revolution of 1792, and nothing now remains even of the cathedral but the stone on which Henry II. of England did penance for the murder of Thomas à Becket. It was certainly characteristic of the spirit of the times that the fanatics should destroy all that was beautiful and holy, and preserve only the stone which recorded a king's humiliation. This stone is near the principal entrance

of the present cathedral, and it bears this inscription :—“ *Sur cette pierre, ici à la porte de la cathédrale d'Avranches, après la meurtre de Thomas Becket, Archevêque de Cantorbéry, Henry II., Roi d'Angleterre et Duc de Normandie, reçut à genoux, des Légats du Pape l'Absolution Apostolique, le Dimanche, 22 Mai, 1172.**

The king was not allowed to enter the cathedral, as he had been excommunicated, until he had promised to make any atonement for his crime that his Holiness the Pope might enjoin. He offered to go as a pilgrim to the Holy Land, but his Holiness decreed that the king should equip two hundred soldiers either to go to Jerusalem, or be sent to the rescue of Spain from the Moors. The inscription on the stone also records the fact that the king swore

* On this stone, at the entrance of the Cathedral of Avranches, after the murder of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry II., King of England and Duke of Normandy, received on his knees, from the Legates of the Pope, Apostolical absolution, on Sunday, May 22, 1172.

upon his knees to fulfil the decree ; and then the door of the cathedral was thrown open and the king entered to pray therein—he was no longer excommunicate ! It is hard to conceive how a proud Plantagenet could kneel like a criminal and vow to obey the will even of Pope Alexander III.

When all this was read and witnessed by the newly-arrived party, Frank declared that they had to “rub up” their History of England ; and with respect to this kind of knowledge both sister Emily and Florence had as much, if not more, than himself and Albert, he candidly acknowledged.

A few weeks after Mrs. Bentley had arrived at Avranches, a friend invited her sons to see the prizes distributed at the College, which is an important institution, having eighteen professors and four hundred students. Frank and Albert quite enjoyed the idea of witnessing the ceremony, as they had very lately *assisted* at one at University College, London ; and as ladies were excluded at the foreign College,

the boys promised to give a very faithful description of the whole affair to the party at home.

The Bishop of Avranches presented the first five prizes. He sat upon a raised dais, or kind of throne, with a table before it, covered with books, and a pyramid of artificial laurel-wreaths, or bay-leaves, and crowns of flowers.

“ Then,” said Frank, who thoroughly enjoyed describing the scene to his mother and the girls, “ the first candidate appeared, a fellow taller than I, when the bishop having given him a book, and some words of approval and advice, the youth knelt down before him, to have a wreath placed upon his head ; but I feared that I really should have burst out laughing, when the bishop kissed the great fellow on his forehead, and then kissed both his cheeks. Only fancy, if you can, Lord John Russell, or Lord Brougham, kissing me and Albert, after putting artificial flowers upon our heads ! Could anything be more ridiculous ? ”

Mrs. Bentley smiled at the idea, and she

owned that, according to our habits and prejudices, it did seem absurd.

“I forgot to tell you,” Frank continued, “that when the candidates were approaching the throne, there was a grand flourish of trumpets, and a long pause between each ceremony, as if to make it more dignified and grand. After the principal prizes were distributed, the bishop retired, and the rest of the rewards were given by the abbés, the professors of the college. Altogether it was a very amusing scene. I heard,” said Frank, “that the fellows had really worked hard, and that they richly deserved their crowns and their kisses.”

Mont St. Michel had been an especial object of interest, as they had viewed it in their walks in every variety of effect—at sunrise, at sunset, and in clear and hazy atmospheres; sometimes looking near, and sometimes only like a cloud beyond the desert of sand.

A visit to this remarkable island-rock was planned for the first convenient season, as it was only at the neap tides that it could be reached

by conveyances from Avranches. Whilst the young people were busily engaged at their lessons, Mrs. Bentley read and inquired all about this singular granite rock, which is four hundred feet high, and becomes an island when the tide is full in. This fortress was once called *Belenus*, the name by which the Druids worshipped the sun. Druidical priestesses used to inhabit it; they wore crowns of vervain, and carried golden quivers filled with magic arrows, which were believed to have the power of allaying storms. The priestesses used to give these arrows to sailors, and a youth was sent to accompany the ship, and he had golden shells attached to his garments.

When the Druids were exterminated by the Romans, the rock was then named Mons Jovis, or the Mountain of Jove; and the Romans continued to occupy it until the third century. According to the legend, the archangel Michael, who had power over all high places, appeared three times to the Bishop of Avranches, and ordered him to build a church to the living

God, on the summit of the neighbouring rock. The good bishop not having immediately obeyed the command of the archangel, he put his finger on the bishop's forehead, and left a hole in his skull, which skull was exhibited for a thousand years! After this woful event, a church was built there, and called St. Michael's; and a monastery was also established on the spot. The pious monks of St. Michael became wealthy, and when the Duke of Normandy set forth for the conquest of England, they were able to contribute six large armed vessels for the famous expedition.

This wonderful fortress was in after years very often besieged by the English, and the monks became celebrated all over Europe for their valour. Their standard was emblazoned with a cross, a mitre, ten scallop-shells, and three fleurs-de-lis.

This island fortress became the resort of pilgrims, and even kings and princes came from distant lands to worship at this holy shrine—a pilgrimage all the more holy for the difficulty

of reaching it. The first Duke of Normandy coined money here, which he called *Angelots* ;* and Louis XI. instituted the order of St. Michael in honour of the saint. Alas for the sacrilege of Time ! This fine rock-temple has become a prison, and the halls which pious priests and princes inhabited are now filled by criminals hopelessly weaving at their looms. The once-gorgeous church, in which the image of the archangel may still be seen, is now used as a dining-room for thieves and murderers !

All these facts were noted down by Mrs. Bentley for her children, and they increased their desire to visit so remarkable and renowned a place, which they decided must be the eighth wonder of the world. A suitable day was fixed upon for the expedition, and they were advised to take the route by Pontorson. At this village—if a few houses can deserve such a name—they crossed the Coësson, the river which divides Normandy from Brittany. They were told by the driver, that when they passed the bridge,

* Angels.

and entered Brittany, they would soon see how small all the people were, as well as their dogs, horses, and cows. Frank and Albert confessed that, when they saw their *ancestors*, they had no reason to be proud of their species, so they would call themselves Englishmen, and not Britons. The men, too, in their rough sheep-skin coats and caps, looked, as Albert said, "like so many Robinson Crusoes." Soon after passing Pontorson, they entered upon the wide, sandy plain left by the sea, and reaching for miles and miles to the far-distant conical rock of Mont St. Michel : this barren waste is said to extend sometimes twelve square leagues, and the drivers of the *calèches** told marvellous tales of the people who had perished in the quicksands.

Soon after the party left Pontorson, they were met by some rough uncouth boys, who offered themselves as guides, presenting to the ladies bunches of flowering tamarisk, which grows almost into the sea. The flowers were

* *Calèche*, calash, a kind of large chaise.

accepted, and paid for, but the guides were declined, as the track was well known to the drivers, and at this season there was no danger. They (the drivers), however, amused the young party by accounts of the large vessels that had been swallowed up not far from Mont St. Michel, and of the numbers of persons who had disappeared in the flesh, but still walked on moonlight nights as ghosts upon the shore. These tales caused a little excitement to the young folks during the dreary miles of sand before them ; and Frank said there might still be spirits walking on the sand, because if they really were spirits they could not be seen nor heard.

After a weary long drive, they began to see the outlines of walls and houses on the rock that they had so long gazed at, and which seemed stuck to the rock like swallows' nests, and then there seemed to rise from the summit the semblance of a Gothic church. In the most remote distance they perceived a dark carriage advancing in the direction of the fortress. This,

their driver said, was conveying prisoners to Mont St. Michel. They saw it stop beneath the mount; the horses were removed from this hearse-like carriage, and then, by chains attached to it, it was slowly drawn by a windlass up an inclined plane, a nearly perpendicular railway, to the prison gates—a gloomy sight to them all, as they were told the greater number of criminals were imprisoned there for life.

Arrived at the gate, the calèches passed under a portcullis; there they alighted, and began the ascent of the town—if such a name can properly be given to a strange medley of ramparts and houses. The steep staircase-like street was ill-paved and very narrow, and *walled* on each side by netted bags, containing cockles, the principal trade of the place, as they are found in profusion bedded in the sand. At length, Mrs. Bentley perceived a kind of tavern, where they might obtain refreshment after their long journey, the best and principal dining-room being reached through the kitchen, and it contained two pretty ornamental beds on one side of it. A whole-

some dinner of different fish was offered them, one being limpets stewed in oil. They were too hungry to be dainty, and they all enjoyed the very novel style of the dinner.

This over, they sallied forth to climb up and explore this singular abode of eight hundred people, including officers and prisoners. There were houses innumerable, here, there, and everywhere, as if they had fallen in a shower from the sky, without any kind of order. Having mounted one hundred and eighty steps to the summit, they came to the leads of the church, where the prisoners walk for exercise, and where are large tanks for the rain-water, to supply the fortress. The old Gothic church has been much despoiled by time and warfare, but some remains of the interlaced arches of a corridor are still beautiful. Mrs. Bentley refused to see the prisoners, it being a sad spectacle for the young, and pure, and hopeful. A rudely-carved and gaudily-painted figure of the archangel Michael subduing the Evil One was proudly exhibited by the verger ; the execution of which figure

by a poor prisoner gained him a reprieve of twenty years of his punishment. The devil was represented as half man and half dragon with two horns and a long red tongue !

There were once dreadful dungeons in the rock, and an iron cage for prisoners. The Count d'Artois, in Louis XVIII.'s reign, gave orders for the iron cage to be destroyed ; but the order was not complied with. The sons of Louis Philippe, years afterwards, visited the prison, and had it broke up before their eyes. Mont St. Michel is still a State prison, and even the governor may be said to be a prisoner, bound to a rock in a desert of sand, or in the middle of the sea !

The young people, and especially Florence, were all much saddened by their visit to this desolate place ; they liked it best at a distance, and they felt relieved and glad to escape from it.

In the prison and in the town various trinkets were exposed for sale, made by the prisoners out of cocoa-nut shells, the fibre of the aloe,

and out of bones—rings, and crosses and anchors and hearts, emblems of Faith, Hope, and Charity—sad memorials of those who had little to give or receive of either.

The waiter at the inn informed Mrs. Bentley that various trades were carried on there ; they sold sand-eels, and prawns, and shrimps ; but their principal occupation was cockle-picking and extracting salt from the sea-sand, or *tangue*, as they called it.

The young people having expressed a wish to walk round the entire mount, the man told them that it was a long round, and rather dangerous.

Whilst Frank and Albert went to order the vehicles to be got ready for their return, Mrs. Bentley and the girls strolled on the sands near the gate. Florence, feeling like a bird just released from a cage, ran quickly on, “just to look round that projecting crag,” she said to her aunt, who, with her usual anxiety concerning her bold, enterprising niece, replied—

“Pray do not go out of my sight, Florence.”

But the reckless girl was already beyond the reach of the warning voice. Emily ran on quickly to call her back, but her cousin soon passed beyond the crag and out of sight, and just as she reached her she beheld her plunging into a quicksand, only saving herself from instant suffocation by her open parasol, and her having caught hold of a low, overhanging branch of a tamarisk !

There was an eddy near the rock which formed a sort of whirlpool—a fearful spot which none of the inhabitants of St. Michel ever went near.

Mrs. Bentley heard Emily's voice crying aloud for help, and ran on. She no sooner saw the danger her niece was in, than with calm presence of mind she pulled off her scarf, and threw one end of it to Florence, holding one end of it firmly herself. She feared to advance a step nearer, lest the sand should yield beneath her feet. She then told Emily to run back and tell her brothers to bring ropes and planks, and assistance from the people at the gate.

Florence was pale with fright, but her alarm did not deprive her of reason and courage. Had she struggled, she would have been lost. Her daring courage had been her evil genius, now it was her safeguard.

"Don't be frightened for me, dear aunt ! I can hold on the branch. I do not think I shall go down !"

This she kept repeating in order to calm her aunt's fears, and change her look of despair. In addition to the love she bore her niece, there was ever in her mind the heavy responsibility that had been given her by an anxious father now no more.

Emily ran faster, and the boys were seen coming sooner even than Mrs. Bentley expected, and with them two men with ropes and planks, exclaiming as they ran, "*Oh, le mauvais pas !*" "*C'est le sable mouvant !*" "*Ma foi ! elle est là !*" "*Elle sera ensablée !*" *

* "Oh, the dangerous spot !" "It is the quicksand !" "My goodness, she is there !" "She will be sanded up !"

Arrived at the place, they set to work, as experience had taught them, placing the boards against the rock at one end, and on the hard sand at the other, on either side of the gap. A loop or noose of rope was thrown round the half buried girl—then the danger was over, and she was drawn to the bank in safety; she, all shame and contrition, and her friends happy and at ease once more.

There was nothing now to be done but to return to the fortress to get Florence's clothes cleansed and dried, and the soil and sand removed from her feet; but the in-coming tide admitted of little delay. All the joyousness and pleasure of the day was over!

No reproach fell from the lips of Mrs. Bentley, and even the fun-loving boys had no spirits left to joke their cousin on her rashness. It had been a matter of life and death. Our heroine formed many good resolutions during her silent, uncomfortable drive back to Avranches, and she told Morris on her return, that she was now cured for life of her

thoughtlessness and recklessness ; for she should never forget the agony expressed in her aunt's countenance. " Her dear aunt could not have felt more, she thought, if Emily had fallen into a bottomless gulf before her eyes."

The next day, too, Florence was very penitent, and she asked her aunt most earnestly to forgive her for having caused so much trouble and anxiety, all owing to her disobedience ! She also thanked Frank and Albert for not laughing at her when she was in the hole ; she must have looked so ridiculous.

" No, Florry," said Frank, " we felt no inclination to laugh when your life was in danger ; we could not bear to lose you now—could we, mamma ?"

These words went straight to the heart of the young orphan, and she said—

" Well, then, I suppose that I must learn to be careful of myself for the sake of others. Thank you, dear Frank, for such a kind lesson ! As I have neither a mother nor father, I must

remember that I have a kind aunt and cousins to care for me !”

Emily kissed her affectionately, and now Florence, overcome by her feelings, ran out of the room. She suffered for some weeks with a severe cold in consequence of her having been so long in the cold wet sand, and her imperfectly dried clothes. The cold settled in her weak ankles and increased the lameness from which she had never quite recovered since her severe accident, and she was tenderly nursed by her aunt and Emily and Morris.

The rash act at Mont St. Michel was never referred to by her friends, but by Florence it was never forgotten ; and in pouring forth her gratitude for her merciful preservation that night, she prayed in her simple-hearted way that she might grow thoughtful and submissive, and learn to regard the feelings of others.

From this time there was a marked change in her character. She was not less gay and cheerful, but there was a certain *réténue* in her manner, as the French term it, She checked

her impulsiveness, and she paused to think if her wishes were right and reasonable before she acted, and this period became an important era in her young life.

CHAPTER V.

AVRANCHES FAIR AND THE VISIT TO
LA GARAYE.

THE studies of the young people were now destined to receive a very exciting interruption, and holidays were given to all the youth of Avranches to attend the annual fair and the races.

The former was held in an open space at the end of the town, near "*Le Jardin des Plantes*," and the latter were to "come off" in a plain about a mile distant from the town, but which could easily be viewed from the heights. These races were announced by large placards in French with all the sporting terms in large capitals in English.

SWEEPSTAKES, HANDICAPS, and STEEPLECHASE stood conspicuous, "Le Sport" now

being the fashion. The races are chiefly attended by Englishmen resident in Guernsey and Jersey, and the hotels of Avranches were crowded with sporting characters.

Mrs. Bentley was glad that her sons could see the races from their garden at Rocheplate ; she therefore invited a party of young friends to join them.

The groups of people arriving from all the neighbouring towns and villages in their picturesque costumes were very attractive to the English party, and Emily wanted to make sketches of the women of Vire, Mortain, Coutances, &c. . Each town has a cap peculiar to itself, of most extravagant size, which is poised upon the head on a frame of wire ; these caps are said to retain the form of those worn eight hundred years ago. Florence declared "that the women looked like large white butterflies ;" upon which Frank remarked that they might be, inasmuch as they were "*grubby* before they came out." This was pronounced to be a very vulgar pun. "If you found out that it was a

pun," said the young lawyer that was to be, "you are guilty of committing the same."

Florence had never seen a fair, even in England ; and, in answer to her inquiries, she was told to expect "no end of swings, roundabouts, theatres, dancing, and pantomimes, &c." These, however, are not the type of a Norman fair, though it proved to be as confusing and bustling and deafening as all other fairs from time immemorial in all countries. Here were to be found stalls of common jewellery, gay ribbons, and cakes and toys, and added to the squeaking of pipes and trumpets and noise of drums, a perpetual frying of fish and *galettes*, or buckwheat cakes, in addition to the neighing of horses and lowing of cows.

Here were auctioneers of handkerchiefs of every colour of the rainbow, besides umbrellas and velvet jackets ; but the greatest peculiarity of the French fair is the zealous dentist or doctor, who attracts crowds of customers. One man, mounted in a caleche, was selling an "instantaneous cure" for toothache. Behold a

young girl handed up to his chaise with her head bound up, "suffering agonies !" One drop of the specific is applied to the tooth ; she tears off her bandages, and jumps for joy amongst the gazing multitude, and the charlatan sells the miraculous drops at any price he asks ! He professed to have lately returned from England, with a diploma from the first dentists in London.

The next important group surrounded an old voluble man dressed in a cocked hat and wig, such as physicians wore in days of yore ! He occupied a high pulpit, behind which was a screen, on which, as he announced, were portraits of his most celebrated patients, and to whom he pointed with a stick as he dilated upon their complaints and his wonderful remedies for them.

These portraits consisted of bad representations of the Emperor and Empress, the Queen of England and Prince Albert, Canrobert and Lord Raglan !

Although he professed to have taken his

degree at Marseilles, his highest demand for his surest and quickest remedy was forty centimes !* •

Before him on a kind of desk, stood numerous phials, containing the most extraordinary parasites, worms, and excrescences—from which, of course he had relieved his patients ; and on each of which he gave a lecture. When he had talked until he was hoarse he paused to regain breath. After a short interval, a drum sounded, attention was arrested, and he began to delude a fresh set of ignorant and credulous peasants.

That which most interested the English visitors was the representation of scenes from Scripture history and sacred legends in a small theatre erected for the purpose.

The first performance was announced as the “Temptations of St. Anthony.” The opening scene showed the good saint praying in a chapel before a crucifix. In a kind of recitative, with a musical accompaniment, he vows to resist every temptation, and whilst he is still in the

* Fourpence.

act of prayer, a beautiful young woman like a ballet-dancer enters, and she calls him "her dear brother Anthony!" He first admires her, then he remembers whom she may be in disguise, and thereupon he suddenly gives her a box on the ear—bidding "Satan depart!" Then follow other temptations—delicious, intoxicating beverage, jovial companions. At last, having resisted them all most virtuously, the Angel Gabriel appears, and promises to convey him to Heaven. In a burst of gratitude Anthony sings, "*Merci, bon ange! merci, bon ange!*"* and he is carried off to Heaven, singing to the secular tune of "*Garçon volage!*"†

The audience seemed quite absorbed and edified by all this, and what might have appeared profane to others raised devotional feelings in this unlettered multitude. There was an intense and serious interest shown by the rustics, which gave these plays a degree of sanctity even to critical visitors.

French ingenuity was fully displayed in the

* Thanks, good angel. † Flighty youth.

farcical portion of the entertainment. There was a Monsieur Caoutchouc, who from a dwarf became a giant; then he cut himself in two, doubled himself into two balls, and rolled off the stage—which exhibition excited roars of laughter.

A man then appeared, who changed his costume fourteen times, and acted the part of every nation he represented.

Next followed a lady, who danced in extensive crinoline; then she became inflated, and passed off as a balloon!

On the following day the same theatre bore the inscription—"AUJOURD'HUI LA PASSION!" This proved to be a representation of our Lord's sufferings and death, similar to the miracle-plays or mysteries of the middle ages, which were then performed in England. The country people who flocked to the fair from Brittany and the remoter parts of Normandy, really enjoyed such exhibitions seriously, as they had no means of reading of the events which occurred in apostolic times, and they

thus seemed to realize transactions interwoven with their religious life. They must have had a good moral influence upon them, as there were no scenes recorded of either riot or intemperance during the fair.

When the bustle and excitement of the fair and races were over, Mrs. Bentley was glad to find that the restless tumult of them had made her young folks glad to resume their quiet occupations and daily duties, though they were pleased to have witnessed what was so strange, and amusing, and foreign to them all ; and they seemed to have looked back to the customs and ways of England five hundred years ago, or to that more fabulous period—
“Once upon a time !”

A few weeks after the fair, Mrs. Bentley received a letter from her husband, announcing his approaching return, and that he meant to take the route home through France, and he hoped to meet all his dear ones safe at Rouen.

Mrs. Bentley had always wished to show her children the picturesque and quaint old town of

Dinan, and the beautiful banks of the Rance on which it stands, before she left the neighbourhood. Here she had passed some happy days on her wedding tour, and she wished to recall them to her remembrance with her children around her. Two days would suffice for their short excursion, and they were conveyed there pleasantly enough by a diligence through Pontorson and Dol, and their "slow coach" allowed them the advantage of visiting some old churches *en route*, and viewing many fair landscapes. Dinan is approached by a lofty viaduct crossing the well-wooded cliffs of the Rance, which rise three hundred feet above the level of the river. The town is a strange, irregular assemblage of Norman and Gothic buildings—houses with high-peaked roofs, with dove-cote windows in them, not built apparently with any view to convenience or health, but as unsymmetrical and picturesque as artist could desire—as if they and their surroundings were made solely to be represented on canvas by a Prout or a Goodall. The overhanging and oriel windows, and the

arcades under them, were fitting sites for the Breton peasants in their unique costume of by-gone ages. The principal square in the town is *La Place Duguesclin*. This renowned and favourite hero was not actually born at Dinan, he was a native of *Rennes*, but as he was descended from the seigneurs of Dinan, who bore the title of Vicomte, he is therefore their hero *par excellence*. His statue adorns the centre of a paved square, surrounded by double rows of lime trees, cut and arched in what is called the Dutch style.

One street in Dinan, which descends to the river, is too steep for carriages to pass through it, nor can even horses go down it with any burthen ; indeed, young people cannot walk very quickly down, nor the old creep without a stick ; and, like a defile in the Alps, the only safe conveyance is a sure-footed mule or donkey. The Dinan donkeys are quite celebrated ; and pictures of them are exhibited in the halls of the hotels as advertisements of their speed.

Anne of Brittany resided here, and a stone

chair is shown in which she sat in her chapel, but this chapel is now converted into a prison; and here, too, is a small garden between two walls, politely termed *Parc aux Anglais*.

A visit to the ruins of the castle of La Garaye was, however, the chief object of Mrs. Bentley's visit to Dinan.

The townspeople and the surrounding gentry are justly proud of being associated with the celebrated good deeds of le Comte and Comtesse La Garaye, whose very remarkable and devoted lives have been the glory and honour of the district; and visitors to Dinan are conjured not to neglect a pilgrimage to La Garaye.

Mrs. Bentley considered it a shrine to be honoured by all who had hearts to feel and minds to estimate a devotion so truly religious as that of the Lord and Lady of La Garaye.

Claude Marot was the second son of the Lord of La Garaye, Governor of the town of Dinan. He entered the army, and fought valiantly at the siege of Namur, in the reign of Louis XV. His elder brother died early, and

then Claude resigned his commission, and lived on the paternal estate until by the death of his father he became Lord of La Garaye. He had married Mademoiselle de la Motte Piquet, who in all respects was his equal, and who possessed every quality to create and secure the attachment of her husband.

She had a high sense of duty, and she resolved to adapt herself to her husband's tastes by every means in her power. He was dexterous in fencing and feats of horsemanship, and loved hunting; and his wife, though frail and delicate, became for his sake an expert horsewoman, and she always accompanied him to the chase; and no one was more brave and untiring than the lovely Gertrude, Lady of La Garaye.

Two years of unclouded happiness had been theirs, when one day, after a long period of heavy rain, a bright morning tempted the happy pair to ride through a wild, romantic wood on the steep, rocky bank of the Rance, into which fell a now widened and foaming torrent, and over which they had often leaped. Claude led

the way, the joyous Gertrude following full speed. The stream was double its wonted size, but the bold steed of its master took its usual leap, but it did not touch the bank, and horse and rider fell together. Claude, though stunned and bleeding, rose in his agony, and shouted frantically to his beloved to "hold back"—"Tempt not the fearful flood!" Her horse flew madly on, no power nor skill could turn it from pursuit.

The leap was terrific, and the Lord of La Garaye with a scream of anguish beheld his darling Gertrude thrown on the rocks, and lying at his feet without sign of life. He turned to the stream, and carried to her opened lips a draught of water; then she breathed out the words—"Oh, my Claude!" as if her sole wish was to expire with words of love to him.

Assistance was procured, and a kind of litter prepared by their attendants to convey the mangled and apparently dying lady to the castle. Messengers were despatched to Dinan

for medical aid, and for some weeks her life was despaired of ; but she lived on in intense suffering, her best amendment leaving her a deformed cripple for life. She bore her pain unmurmuringly and in silence, that her husband might not suffer ; but she wept in secret as she felt that she was—

“Blighted in all her bloom,—her withered frame
Must now inherit age ; young but in name.”

But her sorrow was for her husband, as she repeated—

“Thy life's companion I no more can be,
For thou remainest all thou wert ; but I
Am a fit bride for Death, and long to die.”

Amongst those who came to console the sweet Lady of La Garaye was a good Benedictine monk, and to him she confided her secret grief, and that “she wished to die in order to relieve her devoted husband, and release him from such an anxious care.”

This good man represented to her that her wish, though amiable, was unholy ; that her life

had been mercifully preserved in order to benefit herself and others ; and that she did her husband an injustice in supposing that he could be happy at the sacrifice she desired. This counsel was good seed falling on good ground, and it brought forth a hundred-fold. It awakened good resolves in her mind, and with her husband's consent she planned to turn the castle—once filled with joyous revelry—into an asylum for hopeless invalids like herself. Her excellent husband met all her wishes, and assured her that with a taste for the study of science, which he had not hitherto indulged, and her society and ever-ready love and sympathy, he needed no other sources of happiness.

In a few short months the castle became an hospital—

“ And many a poor worn face, that had not smiled
For years, and many a feeble crippled child,
Blesses the tall white portal where they stand,
And the dear lady of the liberal hand.”

The Lord of La Garaye began to study medicine, and zealously devoted himself to

sanitary schemes and to every branch of the art of healing.

“And Claude, the eager Claude, with fervent heart,
Earnest in all things, nobly did his part.”*

He applied his time and talents to chemistry especially, and ultimately he made many useful discoveries, amongst which was what he named *essential salts*. This discovery having reached the ears of Louis XV., after several successful tests before men of science at Marli, he sent the Comte de la Garaye fifty thousand livres, which were of course devoted by him to science or the wants of the poor, and a few years after the king sent him his picture and that of the queen, with twenty-five thousand livres for another useful discovery in chemistry.

Loved and honoured by the king, in 1725 he

* These and the preceding verses are taken from a poem by Mrs. Norton, entitled “The Lady of La Garaye,” published in 1862; in the preface of which she says of this romance of real life, “that the tale is more striking in its unadorned truth than all the art of the poet could make it.”

was created Chevalier of a royal military order, and afterwards he was raised to the dignity of Grand Hospitalier. Some years after, the young Duke of Ponthieu paid a visit to La Garaye, and stayed there three days, sharing with his host the occupation of "*infirmier*" (attendant on the sick). Claimants for admission to the asylum at the castle were so numerous that they increased beyond its limits, and to refuse assistance was so painful to its benevolent owners, that the Comte resolved to found an hospital for incurables in the town of Dinan. This establishment still exists and flourishes, and the names and virtues of its founders are kept alive by this noble memorial.

In relating the Count's good deeds, it must not be forgotten by the English that he made the bequest of a large sum to the prisoners of Rennes and Dinan, who were English officers and soldiers, suffering in these crowded foreign gaols all the horrors which Howard afterwards endeavoured to reform. These truly Christian benefactors lived beyond the age of seventy,

dying near each other, so that, as in their lives, in death they were not divided.

This remarkable narrative, obtained from various sources, made the pilgrimage to the ruins of the castle of La Garaye tenfold more interesting, though the walk, the cliffs, and the river scenery were in themselves delightful. This tale of self-sacrifice and devotion made so deep an impression on Florence that its influence was life-long.

Next to hers, Albert's admiration and interest were the most excited of the party, especially about the Count's devotion to the sick, and his discoveries in chemistry, for Albert had already told his father that he should like to be a doctor, and he had shown great interest in curative experiments when a mere boy ; though Frank had once said as a joke "that he had never done more than set his dog's leg !" However, they one and all enjoyed the visit to Dinan and its environs, and they declared that it was a charming conclusion to their foreign experiences, if they had no more. The travellers

regretted to leave many kind friends, who had made their sojourn at Avranches so pleasant, but the preparations for their journey to meet their father, with "Home, sweet home" at the end of it, were very cheering.

CHAPTER VI.

BAYEUX.

MRS. BENTLEY planned for them to pass one day at Bayeux on their way to Rouen, that the young people might see the celebrated historical tapestry preserved there, not merely because it is known to be the oldest piece of needlework in the world, but because it is especially interesting as an important record of the principal events which formed the link in the early history of France and England, when Queen Matilda and her maidens were living and working so diligently.

When they reached Bayeux, they first went to the cathedral to hear a beautiful *Te Deum*, resounding through the splendid Gothic aisles, by a very celebrated choir, and then they proceeded to the museum, where the tapestry is now

exhibited. It was originally intended to adorn the cathedral, but for the sake of its better preservation it was taken down from thence and placed in a large room in the museum of the town, where other curiosities are exhibited.

This historical work is about eight hundred years old, and was worked by the wife of William the Conqueror, assisted by the ladies of her court, and a most elaborate piece of work it is.

The length of it is about seventy yards, and not more than two feet high, having a narrow pattern or border above and below the whole, which gives the idea of its having been round a room or gallery. It is preserved in glass-cases, and they are placed in a quadrangle in the middle of a large hall. There are Latin inscriptions over each subject, which serve to help out the story. It is of a coarse kind of worsted work, quite unlike the superior picture-weaving of the Gobelins, adorning the palaces of the kings of France. It is more like the old tapestry

in the Round Tower at Windsor, or that in Hampton Court. The figures are more rude than those on the walls of Nineveh, and they much resemble children's first attempts at drawing the human figure. The noses are in profile of front faces, and the figures outlined in dark brown, and the horses are green or blue, or of "any colour that real horses never were before or since," as Albert said.

Dr. Lingard has thrown some doubts about the tapestry having been worked by the queen, though a contemporaneous chronicle affirms that it was. The Doctor argues that the want of costliness in the materials did not bespeak a royal benefactress—"there is neither embroidery in gold or silver or silk—nothing worthy of the rank and munificence of the supposed donor." He may have thought it thus unworthy of a gift to the cathedral; but it might have been estimated by the cost of time devoted to it. This wonderful work contains 623 men, 202 horses, 55 dogs, 37 buildings, 41 ships and boats, 49 trees—in all, 1512 figures—so says the guide-

book. The first compartment represents Edward the Confessor seated on a throne, ordering his brother-in-law, Harold, to depart for Normandy to announce to William, the reigning duke, that he had named him his successor to the throne of England.

Then Harold sets off with his falcon on his wrist, according to the custom of the time. He wears moustaches, which was not then the fashion in France, and he is represented as visiting a church to pray for a safe voyage; then he and his suite are seen embarking with their dogs and falcons.

There are very different accounts given by historians of this voyage of Harold's: some say he was wrecked on the coast of Normandy, and did not intend to go there; but we think that the queen is not likely to have worked a fiction.

The next picture represents Harold's arrival in Normandy, and his meeting Guy, Comte de Ponthieu. One of the English party seems to be challenging a Frenchman, by spreading out

both his hands and touching his nose with his right thumb! This greatly amused Frank and Albert, as they did not know before that this vulgar salutation was of such a remote origin. Harold is seized and a parley ensues, when the Duke of Normandy insists that the prisoner shall be released.

Harold is next seen when conducted to William's palace; and history relates that he was entrapped into swearing fealty to William the Duke.

The tapestry next records that Harold takes his followers to Mont St. Michel, and having passed the river Coësson, part of his suite is lost in a quicksand. It was especially interesting to Florence and her cousins to see the representation of Harold dragging two of his men out of the sand near Mont St. Miche. Frank remarked thereon, that there were indiscreet young persons eight hundred years ago as well as an especial one in Queen Victoria's reign; which Florence acknowledged with a very significant nod of acquiescence.

The French reach Dol, and the army of Duke William attacks Dinan, the town is taken, and the keys of it are presented to him, and he returns to Bayeux.

The next picture is Harold's return to England, and his presentation to Edward the Confessor. Here ensues a strange anachronism in the tapestry — in the order of events. Edward the Confessor's body is shown on its way to the church of St. Peter the Apostle, at Westminster, his burial preceding his death, as the next representation is his death-bed scene, in which Harold is receiving the crown from Edward the Confessor. The ceremonials attending Harold's coronation occupy thirty compartments.

The story on canvas concludes with the Duke of Normandy's arrival in England, and the battle of Hastings, with all the English put to flight, and the death of Harold. The work, considering its great age, is in wonderful preservation, and moths have been forbearing. A certain especial difference between William and

Harold, French and English, has been preserved throughout, and the French are all to be distinguished by having their upper lips shaven !

Emily, and even Florence, declared that without being too vain of their powers, they could make better figures on canvas than Queen Matilda ; but they were reminded by their wiser companion that they must have forgotten the very inferior materials employed eight hundred years ago, and that we might justly conclude that our wool, canvas and needles were nearly eight centuries better. The figures did not seem to stand, but they looked as if they were stuck against a wall—there was no perspective, no foreground, no distance ! At last, however, they freely owned that the whole memorial of past events was valuable and curious, and that the courtly ladies in 1066 and 1067 were very industrious, and that posterity was much obliged to them.

History gives a strange account of William of Normandy's courtship of this devoted wife.

For seven long years he sued in vain ; Matilda of Flanders was deaf to his wishes, it was said because she was attached to a Saxon nobleman. At length, William, in a truly characteristic spirit, was determined upon revenge, and to punish her disdain, he resolved to attack her in a warlike fashion, and conquer her by force of arms ; he therefore set off with a few retainers for Bruges, where the Princess resided.

He laid in wait for her as she came out of church, and, in the words of the old chronicler of Tours, "He seized her, and coolly rolled her in the mud, to the no small injury of her costly attire ; then, after a few more *striking* proofs of his regard, which she must have sensibly felt from such a hand, the lover rode away full speed, leaving her to account for this novel mode of courtship as best she could !—She actually considered these blows as so many proofs of the violence of his affection !"*

* As quoted in Roscoe's "Life of the Conqueror."

Nothing can show more forcibly the rough habits of the period than that such conduct, on the part of a lover, should be acknowledged as an evidence of the *tenderness* of his affection, and that it should receive Maude's approval, and make her forget her early attachment. Her father conveyed this acknowledgment to the young duke, and informed him that he had gained his daughter's affections, as he had shown himself so persevering, so determined, and so brave ! And in a brief space the nuptial ceremonies were solemnized with a splendour becoming the greatness of the occasion.

The bride was descended from Alfred the Great, which was then considered an honourable distinction.

When this curious anecdote was discussed by the travellers, the ladies of the party declared that female taste must have altered greatly in eight hundred years, as such conduct would disgust and certainly not captivate. "He could never have been *their* William the Conqueror !"

Frank suggested that in those days the female mind must have been like that far-famed spaniel and walnut-tree—"The more you beat them, the better they be !"

CHAPTER VII.

THE RETURN HOME.

THE day of meeting Mr. Bentley at Rouen proved one of quiet rejoicing, for they did little more than sit on the banks of the Seine, and whilst admiring the wooded heights and the church of Bon Secours on one side, and the country houses at Cantéleu on the hills on the other, they talked over their adventures in Spain and Normandy and Brittany, and especially the latter. The good father was gratified to find that they all, and the boys particularly, were able to speak French with ease and correctness, which notice greatly gratified them, as they had been very diligent in their efforts to surprise father with fluent French.

Mr. Bentley told Florence that "she looked quite staid and dignified—*réténue*, as the French call it ; he had previously remarked privately to her aunt that there was a repose in her manner that was a great improvement upon her former restless habits. Florence, with her usual candour, begged that he would not praise her, as he had yet to learn her misdemeanours ; but she added, "that she had very good intentions of becoming in time as like dear Milly as possible."

Since the party had been homeward-bound they had all felt a strong desire to proceed without delay, and a long and due inspection of the beautiful Gothic edifices in Rouen was to be deferred until some future period ; but Florence hoped they would not leave this interesting city without visiting the monument of her favourite heroine, Joan of Arc. Frank wished to see the fine Palace of Justice, and Mrs. Bentley the church of St. Ouen, one of the finest specimens of Gothic architecture in Europe. As these sights were all near each

other, a day might suffice to gratify the taste of each and all.

The splendid and complete specimens of architecture within the cathedral of St. Ouen, made Mr. Bentley remark, that these buildings seemed as perfect as if the humblest mason had worked with a holy feeling and a desire to make their work worthy of its purpose. Emily was anxious to know why the ornaments of the arches and buttresses were generally hideous faces of men or animals? Her father said in reply, "that they were supposed to represent the evil spirits and demons of heathendom that Christianity had come to destroy."

The Palace of Justice is also a very remarkable specimen of Gothic architecture. The attendant who showed the place was very prompt in his replies to all Frank's questions about the seats and proceedings of the judge and jury and witnesses, &c. He told him their rules, and he presented him with a stamped paper, on which the jurymen *write* their verdicts of guilty or not guilty. Frank was, like other British youths,

♦

very slow to believe that any plan could be better than that of his own country, but he afterwards admitted that there might be something more solemn in a juror having to sign his name beneath the words, "SUR MON HONNEUR ET MA CONSCIENCE, MA DECLARATION EST," &c., printed in large letters, and stamped with the eagle and imperial crown as a guarantee.

The whole party then adjourned to take a glimpse of the Museum, where they were informed that they should see many Roman antiquities that had been dug up in the neighbourhood of Rouen. The custodian showed so much ignorance concerning these ill-arranged specimens, that they were more amused than edified. One piece of basso-relievo, which was evidently a Roman warrior sacrificing a child, probably at the siege of Jerusalem, was declared to be "Solomon's judgment."

"But you know," said Florence, vehemently, "he never *did* divide the child!"

To which the guide coolly replied, "*Cela*

se peut, mais c'est toujours Salomon."* He showed them an effigy of an archbishop, whom he described as Saint Thomas de *Cantorberie*.

"I suppose you mean Thomas-a-Becket!" said Albert, bluntly. At which the pious man looked greatly scandalized, and he seemed as much shocked as if a profane name had been uttered, and he would not allow that this holy saint in heaven was an Englishman.

Having cut short their inspection of the museum, they had time to visit a *crèche*,† established and superintended by Sisters of Mercy. It was admirably conducted, and quite delighted the females of the party. The little infants in their cots, which swung them so gently to sleep, seemed in such happy circumstances whilst their mothers were working for them. For those who could crawl, and were learning to walk, there was a railed enclosure softly padded; and there was also a nice labora-

* "It may be so, but still it *is* Solomon!"

† "Crib." The name given to a nursery for children whose mothers go out to work.

tory adjoining, where a sister was compounding medicines for the invalids. Over several cots were inscribed the names of their founders, and one bore a superscription in English: "As a memorial of my lost Eveline!" A certain sum laid down would insure another little crib to be placed in the establishment for another little babe. Florence called her uncle aside, and begged him to let her subscribe for another cot, and to have the inscription over it—"In memory of her father!" Mr. Bentley did not hesitate to comply with so earnest and pious a desire, and thus they all established a pleasant remembrance of Rouen and its good Sisters of Mercy.

Joan of Arc was not forgotten, but her effigy in the old market-place rather disappointed Florence, as she expected it would be as interesting as the fine statue of the heroine sculptured by the Princess Marie, Louis Philippe's daughter.

Amongst the recesses of these Gothic buildings they found some boys playing at "*Quatre*

coins,"* called in English, as the boys said, "Puss in the corner."

The old market-places in this town are still very picturesque ; instead of stalls, the vendors of fruit and vegetables and flowers sit under large red umbrellas, about six feet in diameter, to shelter themselves and their goods ; the old women in high white caps, like funnels, blue gowns, and red petticoats, and by their side rich green melons, and large globe-like pumpkins of the brightest orange. Mrs. Bentley and Emily, who were fond of sketching, much regretted that they could not stay at Rouen a few days in order to "take" some of the country people, the niches, and the fountains.

The whole family expressed a hope that at some future time they might revisit Rouen. They reached Dieppe the next day in the evening, and embarked very early for Newhaven, on a bright morning, with a favourable wind. "Time and tide, with a plentiful supply of hot water," as Frank said, enabled them to perform

* Four corners.

their journey without adventure or misadventure, until they reached "dear old Heathfield."

After a week's rest, and *setting to rights*, and neighbourly greetings, they returned to their former habits and home duties, and with more steadiness than might have been expected after their late excitement. The boys returned to College, and Emily and Florence began their customary lessons, walks, and rides; and in this wholesome routine the next year was passed, with no remarkable event to mark its progress.

"One week and one month," as Florence said, "was the twin sister of the other, and very pleasant sisters they were."

Early in the following spring, however, Florence experienced a trial which developed her grateful character. Nurse Morris took a severe cold, which settled into a rheumatic fever. Her pain and suffering seemed to become that of her beloved young mistress, who was determined that no one should attend upon the in-

valid but herself. Her aunt remonstrated, to whom she warmly replied—

“Dear aunt, Morris has been a mother to me, and nursed me when I was ill, and never spared herself night or day. Would you not wish that Milly should nurse you in preference to any one else? Who could love you so well?”

“For that very reason,” replied Mrs. Bentley, “she might fear to give necessary pain; and even strong affection will not give experience, which is the great essential in a nurse. No, dear niece, I am sorry to restrain your loving zeal, but you must be satisfied to be her occasional nurse, and you must take daily exercise in the open air, during which time I will take your place at Morris’s bedside. At night she will have a nurse whom I know and can trust.”

Often during Morris’s illness Mrs. Bentley would hear in the middle of the night a soft step upon the stairs, when a slender, ghost-like figure, all in white, was going up to listen at the sufferer’s door. If a moan were heard, that

door was opened gently, and comforting words were spoken to "dear Morris," and her pillow smoothed by her loving child.

"Go to bed and sleep, darling, or I shall be uneasy," was the feeble notice of the patient ; but the visit was a soothing-draught of love to her.

During the first few weeks of her nurse's illness, Florence could do little but give the medicine regularly, and pray for its efficacy ; but as the invalid improved, she could read and talk to her, which relieved the sufferer's mind and made the weary days of sickness seem shorter.

Reading and repeating hymns was delightful to Morris. Unknown to herself the melody of the verse was pleasing to her ear, and, as she expressed it, "so much, dear Miss Florence, is said in a few lines, like King David's Psalms." In a short time the patient asked her young attendant to sing to her the Evening Hymn ; and then, as a great treat, she asked for that beautiful hymn she had lately learned, "Nearer my God to Thee !" Florence readily gratified

her good Morris, and she put forth, for her old nurse's pleasure, a skill and power that those who were listening at the door had no idea that she possessed. Morris's favourite verse was—

“ There let the way appear
Steps unto heaven;
All that thou sendest me,
In mercy given;
Angels to beckon me
Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee.”

She said “it brought Jacob's dream to her mind,” and she was glad to hear that it was intended to do so.

If the fond nurse thought it must be like that the angels sang in Heaven, the grateful and delighted invalid may be pardoned for so thinking. During the many hours that Florence was alone with her patient, her favourite subject of conversation was a scheme for Morris to have a house of her own in a few years time, and she reminded her nurse that her good master had always talked of establishing a home for invalid

children to be under her care, "because you took such care of me when I was a little child ; and you know, Morris, that you have often said that I should be a great heiress some day, so I shall have a house built on purpose for you, and you shall call it your very own ; and you can have some grown-up girls to help you, whom you can teach to be good nurses like yourself, as well as having the care of little invalids."

To Morris this scheme opened a fair land of promise which she was unworthy to reach but Florence assured her she deserved to have a home of her own to be useful in, as she had truly earned one. Then Florence went on to say that as soon as Morris was well she would talk to her uncle and aunt about her favourite scheme.

Often in a sleepless night the idea of her darling's kindness mingled with the sufferer's holiest thoughts and soothed her pain. Morris's recovery was a subject of rejoicing to all the family at Heathfield, not only on her own account, but because Florence, released from duty

in the sick-room, was amongst her friends again.

Everything had been given up—uncle, aunt, cousins, rides, walks, dogs, and ponies, all were forgotten in one absorbing subject of interest and anxiety. Frank had said that “Florence was the life of the house, which had lately been buried;” and he found every one agree with him. She seized an early opportunity of talking with her uncle about her scheme, as she had promised Morris that she would, and she especially interested him in it by telling him that her father had often said if he lived near London he would establish a kind of asylum for poor invalid children, in order that they might have the benefit of fresh air and exercise, which his own child had enjoyed so abundantly.

“But I wish it, dear uncle,” said the ever-candid Florence, “because Morris would so much like to have a house of her own.”

“But how can you live without Morris?” said Frank, who was present when the project was talked of.

"I think that I can learn to dress myself and take care of my own clothes, as I have been practising lately; besides, I shall be so glad to see Morris in her own house. You know that I can work, Frank, and that I have grown 'quite a lady,' as Morris says. You need not look so incredulous; I am not like a boy now."

She then grew very earnest, and she told her uncle that she was very impatient to carry out her scheme, though she was aware that she could not command any sum of money sufficient for the purpose until she was of age, but she knew that her aunt had all her mother's jewels, and she hoped that her uncle would let her sell them.

"What use could they be put to?" said the young ward, "half so good as to carry out a plan that my dear father would have approved of?"

Florence was disappointed when her uncle coolly replied, "that as her guardian he could not sanction her disposing of the family jewels until she was twenty-one; but as her good father had left full power to his trustees to gratify any

of his daughter's charitable wishes, he would confer with his co-trustee, Mr. Beresford, in order to decide whether her scheme were practicable before she came of age."

. Mr. and Mrs. Bentley were pleased with their niece's generous intentions, and they did not think that she was likely to repent such a disposal of her property when she grew older ; but it was too important an affair to engage in from a sudden impulse, or without very mature consideration, however good in itself. Frank and Albert, who were at home, then entered zealously into Florence's "grand scheme," as they called it, and they would not let the subject drop. They amused themselves in fixing on an appropriate site and a very distinguished name for the "Institution." Frank suggested the "Wrexford Hospital ;" Albert said "Wellington Place" would do ; Emily thought of "Recovery House," or "Bettering Lodge ;" and Mrs. Bentley put in a claim in favour of "The Convalescent's Home." This was generally liked, though Florence thought it sounded too grand.

In a few weeks' time Mr. Bentley told his niece that he had conferred with Mr. Beresford, and that they had both come to the conclusion that the projected scheme was feasible, and creditable to their ward, and quite in accordance with her father's tastes and wishes, as regarded the disposal of some of his long-hoarded wealth. But they both agreed that any decided proceedings should remain in abeyance for at least a year. Then her uncle assured her that the funds would be forthcoming, as he had undertaken the responsibility of their advance. Florence could only repeat—

“Thanks! thanks! dear uncle! I must go and tell Morris the good news!”

And the impulsive young heiress ran off to carry the intelligence to the servants' hall. A whole year seemed a long time to wait for a favourite scheme to be carried out; but it very soon became a subject of general interest, and by the next long vacation the search for an appropriate site began.

It was desirable to have a high and dry

situation, with land enough for the feed of two cows—for a playground, a kitchen and a flower-garden ; and a good clear spring must be forthcoming. All these things, Florence said, were essentials, and moreover it must be within an easy walk of Heathfield.

A most eligible piece of land was at last obtained, and then followed the amusing ceremony of cutting the first sod ; and as Florence was considered the Lady of the Manor, she was made to dig, and wheel the barrow, and she was to lay the first stone of the building. Plans were now talked of, and drawings made without end, by the young amateur architects, as suggestions for the professional gentleman to be employed. In these plans the ornamental designs were pre-eminent, and convenience and stability almost forgotten.

Nothing of moment occurred at this time except friendly meetings and cheerful readings. Albert, being at leisure, proposed having a "Botany class," composed of Emily and Florence, and Willy Brown as "*undergraduate*," as an

insight of the history and classification of plants would be valuable to him.

Both Florence and Emily became much interested in this new pursuit, and when the former was shown the wild geranium, or crane's-bill, as the type of the brilliant pelargoniums of our conservatories, and it was offered as a proof of the wonders produced by cultivation, &c., she remarked, "that perhaps the hard, wild, sour crab-apple of the Yorkshire hedges *might* become, by culture, a golden pippin. Or rather—to apply it to her own case—a useful codlin or sweet pearmain." Emily would not admit of any similarity, as the crab was deceitful, and looked sweet and pretty outside, when within it was hard and sour! Many were the walks and talks of the four happy cousins about this period. In their country rambles Florence often surprised her companions by her ever-active benevolence towards everyone who needed help. Frank declared "that she walked abroad on purpose to help old men over stiles and to assist little girls to carry pails of water!"

This was of course declared by the "culprit" to be an exaggeration ; but whilst they joked and rallied their cousin, and told tales of her to her aunt, they loved her for this very kindheartedness, and they were all aghast one day when she asked Mrs. Bentley, "if she had not better go and settle in the backwoods of America, and give up all thoughts of being a refined and polished lady?" Her aunt smiled, and said "that considering she was only in her seventeenth year, and that she had grown lately both gentle and discreet, she need not think of emigrating."

One day, not long after this conversation, Emily asked her brother Frank if he would fetch something for her from the village, when he excused himself by saying "that he could not leave off reading, as he was in the most interesting part of his book."

At this moment Mrs. Bentley entered the room, saying, "Who will ride with Florence? She wants to go to Seymour Court." "I will!" said Frank, and throwing down his book

without any hesitation, he went out to order his horse.

Milly then said to her mamma that "she began to think Frank liked Florence better than he liked her," and she added, with her usual good-nature, "but I do not mind *that*, for I should like her to be my sister some day!"

Mrs. Bentley made no rejoinder, but the remark led her to think more seriously of what had often been a subject of conversation with her husband. A short time after this, Florence was summoned to the library. "Mr. Bentley wished to speak with her," the servant said.

"How odd!" exclaimed Frank. "Why does not my father come here?"

Florence went out immediately, and she thought her aunt and uncle looked very grave when she entered the room, and Mr. Bentley rose formally and took her hand, and placed her on the sofa, and having seated himself, he thus began—

"You are aware, my dear niece, that you

were placed by your good father under your aunt's especial care during your childhood ; but you have other guardians besides ourselves. You are now nearly eighteen years of age, therefore these guardians—Mr. and Mrs. Beresford—have written to me to suggest that it is time that you should see more of the world than our narrow circle affords, and that, as you are old enough to enter society—or what is called the fashionable world—Mr. and Mrs. Beresford have sent you an invitation to visit them for some months, even for years if you wish to do so. This is in order that you may find out whether you prefer a town life or a country life.”

“ Oh ! ” said Florence, in a distressed tone.

“ Hear me out, dear girl,” continued her uncle. “ I think that it *is* right that you should be able to judge *fairly* for yourself, and your aunt thinks so too ; and, indeed, your excellent father would have said the same, under the circumstances in which you are

placed, to judge from the instructions which he has left us."

"I am so sorry," and tears came into the eyes of the young orphan. "I never can be so happy anywhere as at Heathfield. I am not suited to live with fine ladies and in grand society—indeed I am not."

"Perhaps not," replied Mr. Bentley. "But wiser people than you, Florence, have been fascinated with the gay world, and London has many attractions that you know not of. It is now time to reveal to you, my dear niece, that you inherit from your father very great wealth, and therefore great responsibilities. Your future fortune would enable you to move in a higher circle than ours; higher, I mean, as regards wealth and expenditure; therefore it is only right that you should avail yourself of the opportunity of judging for yourself what kind of society will best suit your taste, in accordance with the views of your thoughtful father."

After this second reference to her father's

wishes, Florence made no appeal, and she seemed resigned to her fate.

Mr. Bentley cheered her by saying—

“Whatever be the result of the experiment, you will ever find a welcome here, for you have gained a place in all our hearts; and should you wish to return to our quiet life at Heathfield, you will always have a home amongst us.”

He then kissed his niece affectionately.

Florence went with a sad heart to her own room; even the announcement of her future great fortune seemed rather to depress than elate her. She had never known a want; and her father and her friends had always led her to believe that great riches bring with them great and difficult duties.

Mr. and Mrs. Bentley were not merely what is called highly respectable people, fulfilling the duties enjoined by their position in an irreproachable manner, they performed them conscientiously and religiously.

The charge of their young ward was to them

one of serious responsibility, as her future happiness seemed to depend upon them ; and, as we have said before, Mrs. Bentley was nervously watchful over her niece's health and well-being.

Few injunctions had been made in Mr. Wreford's will, but many letters had been written to her before his death, and these were held as sacred as any legal document,—perhaps even more so.

It was very natural that, thrown together as Frank and Florence were, they should become attached to each other ; but it was not for their future happiness that it should be merely “a desirable match,” and the result of circumstances rather than that of spontaneous choice. This conviction prompted the high-principled guardians to delay no longer acting according to Mr. Wreford's suggestion by giving his daughter the opportunity of judging for herself in a matter so essential to her happiness.

Mr. Bentley soon acquainted his son, towards whom he had always acted with great openness, that it was his mother's wish, as well as his own,

that he, Frank, should forego visiting Florence whilst she was at the Beresford's. If he had already formed a desire to obtain the affections of his cousin, he should prove to her that he was capable of a great sacrifice for her sake. That he must work hard in his profession in order to gain an honourable position which he could invite her to share. "The best way to gain any great good is, you know, to deserve it. And I ask no pledge from you, Frank, because I can trust to your high sense of duty and honour, and I know you will not disappoint your mother or me."

The much-dreaded day of separation arrived, and at parting Mrs. Bentley conjured her sorrowing niece to make no hasty judgments—no decision—until the lapse of some months at least, and to avoid as much as possible writing complaints to Milly if she were not satisfied with her new abode.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE YEAR'S TRIAL.

THE family to which Florence was assigned formed a decided contrast to the loved one at Heathfield. It consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Beresford, a son, an officer in the Guards, and two daughters. They might have been described merely as a fashionable family, Mr. Beresford alone having superior tastes, feelings, and pursuits. The ladies were strictly polite and amiable, with refined and aristocratic habits, but they were inert and passive, holding the belief that to be energetic or enthusiastic in any pursuit, or for any object, was vulgar. So fearful were they of the title of strong-minded women that they went to the other extreme, and pretended to know nothing of public affairs, or of any philanthropic schemes.

Equally were they afraid of being classed with *District Visitors*, or tract distributors, deeming it quite beneath their position in life to visit a poor neighbour—or even a sick child. As their household claimed no duties for them to fulfil, they spent their leisure time in working worsted pictures and making holes in muslin ! They soon decided that Florence's activity and enthusiasm arose from her rustic education, and they were often startled by her blunt and sincere expression of her likes and dislikes.

The young officer, Mr. Beresford's son, was also fastidious in his judgment on his father's ward ; and though he admired her fine, fresh, healthy beauty and sweet countenance, and thought she might be trained and made presentable as Mrs. Marcus Beresford, yet he determined to be very careful how he "committed himself." Though he thought it a great pity that such a fortune as Miss Wreford's should be spent in the country, and devoted to tracts, missions, hospitals, &c.

We shall see what Miss Wreford thought of him in a letter which, after more than two months' residence in her new abode, she addressed to her cousin Emily.

“Eaton Square.

“I have complied with my aunt's wish, dear Milly, and though I have often longed to talk to you with my pen, I have contented myself with thinking about you all *very much*. I am even now *quite sure* that I shall never be reconciled to what is called ‘London life.’

“Everyone is attentive and kind to me, certainly, but having passed from my childhood such a free, active life, I cannot bear the formal, idle routine of our days here. I sometimes feel as if I were a colt tethered on a lawn, with pleasant gardens around me, but without freedom or usefulness of any kind. I have, however, enjoyed many delightful concerts, and I have visited splendid exhibitions of pictures; but I long to be amongst birds, and woods, and breezy hills, instead of ‘walking *round the Square*,’ or riding in Rotten Row. Please tell my aunt,

and believe it yourself, dearest Milly, that I never can be so happy anywhere as at dear Heathfield. But in saying this I am not speaking the exact truth, as it is not Heathfield *itself* that I love so much, but I can never be truly happy away from you all. Tell my aunt to remember that, until I knew you, I had never known what it was to have companions of my own age, nor a kind aunt to care for me. I will endeavour to fulfil the wishes of my dear friends by staying here until the end of my year of *trial*, for trial I must call it.

“I had a little adventure at a party lately. A gentleman begged to be introduced to me, when he said that he had seen me before, and that he recognised me although I was so much altered. I looked at him, and in my usual *garuche* way I said that ‘I did not remember him.’ To which he quietly replied, ‘Probably not, as you were then fainting after extreme pain.’ This gentleman proved to be a Mr. Elton who so kindly assisted me the day of my misfortune at Drayton. Thereupon I recovered

my self-possession, and I said that I was very glad of the opportunity to thank him, and I then told him that it was *my* fault alone which caused the accident of my broken ankle, from which I still deservedly suffer, and which now prevents my dancing. I then explained that I had been advised by my best friend not to go near the hunt, and that unknown to her I had taken my cousin's pony that had not been trained for a lady's riding. He said that just before I fell, he had been remarking that he had never seen anyone so young sit a horse so well. As I could not dance he was polite enough to talk to me for some time, and he said that as he lived near Heathfield he would call upon Mr. Bentley, as he should like to make his acquaintance.

"Let me hear from you soon, dear Milly, how the building of the new place goes on, and everything that you can tell me about *home* will be welcome to

"Your loving cousin,

"FLORRY."

"P.S.—I have so much admired Landseer's pictures that you will soon receive a case containing some engravings of them. 'Laying down the Law' is for Frank's room, as he is a lawyer; 'A Member of the Humane Society' for Albert's, as he is to be a doctor; and 'Beauty's Bath' for yours. Morris sends her dutiful respects. She does not like London any better than I do."

To this letter Emily Bentley replied, with their united thanks for the beautiful engravings, they were all so interesting; but Frank had persuaded Albert to change with him, as he wished particularly to have the "Member of the Humane Society" *out of compliment to Duckweed Brown.*

In a future letter Florence remarked "that it was so delightful to hear Mr. Beresford speak of her father, and their happy college days together. As his eyes are not strong he likes me to read the *Times* to him, and he talks to me of what is interesting to him in public affairs."

Of Mr. Marcus Beresford she says, "He is very fashionable, gay, and handsome, and polite to me, but he is not worthy of such a father, and he will call him 'governor.'"

At the party to which Florence alludes, Mr. Elton had had his attention called to the "handsome young heiress, a ward of Mrs. Beresford's." To his surprise, he recognised in her the young lady who came to grief at the Drayton hunt, a few years before. He had always felt an interest in her, from the grateful manner in which Mrs. Brown spoke of her. On his introduction, therefore, he referred directly to the accident at Drayton, and he told her that he knew more of her antecedents—her good deeds—than she was aware of, and that she must not consider him a stranger. "He knew all about Willy Brown, and his grateful mother." This surprised and amused Florence, and when he called her "quite a heroine" in her rescue of the little boy, she declared that it appeared to her a ridiculous compliment, for really she ran no risk, and if he had seen her

and Willy covered with duckweed and dripping with water, he would have laughed at them both. Against this, polite Mr. Elton protested. "The unskilful might laugh," he said, "but the judicious would admire!" He was so much pleased with her candour, bright intelligence, and freedom from all affectation, that he decided upon obtaining an introduction to the Bentleys through his friend Mr. Beresford.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COMING OF AGE.

AFTER a year's residence with the Beresford family, during which a long visit to Brighton, with pleasant rides on the Downs, had tended to make the period of separation from her cousins appear shorter, the young heiress returned in a most happy frame of mind to Heathfield.

Mrs. Beresford having escorted her young guest, she took occasion to speak most favourably of her good sense and sweet temper, and she admitted that Miss Wreford's early training had certainly fitted her for retired life, and blinded her to the attractions which London society offered, and really she seemed when with them quite unconscious of the ordinary

advantages of wealth. Then Mrs. Beresford intimated that their young ward might have raised her position in life by marriage had she so minded. Emily thought this alluded to an offer from Captain Marcus Beresford, but she had no intimation of this from Florence.

Though charmed to return to Heathfield, and to be at ease and in her cousins' society, Florence was a little disappointed to find that little progress had been made in the building of Morris's house. Many unforeseen difficulties had occurred about drainage, and finding a good spring, and then a builders' strike supervened. It was evident that for a year at least the house would not be completed, and this was a great trial to youthful impatience; but Florence's interest in her favourite scheme was soon diverted and absorbed by the serious illness of her much-loved and respected uncle. He became in great danger, but the threatened calamity of losing him was mercifully averted.

He rallied, but being still delicate, his medical friends suggested that he should pass the

winter at Torquay. Frank and Albert would have felt the separation more keenly, had not the former begun to "eat his terms" in the Middle Temple, and Albert gone to reside with a medical professor, and begun to "walk the hospitals." Six or eight months' separation must necessarily make a great change in them all, especially in affection, which, however, seemed in fresh soil to increase rapidly, and to grow more strong.

As Florence was no longer dependent upon Morris for assistance, she proposed that she should remain at Heathfield to superintend the workmen at Meadowside, which was the name of the land on which the Convalescents' Home was to be built. None of the party had visited Devonshire before, and they were all delighted with its climate, and luxuriant flowers, and pretty hills and dales. Emily and Florence were pleased to study a great deal, and to inform Frank and Albert that they were imitating them, though their pursuits were much more lively than law and medicine. Mr. Bentley's

health improved gradually and securely, and he said that he had not felt so well since his visit to Spain, which had certainly undermined his health.

In the following June, when our treacherous east winds had passed, the whole family re-assembled at Heathfield. They had all a host of small occurrences to relate, which were of mutual interest, though not important enough to fill letters. The "Convalescents' Home" was roofed in at last, and the gardens were in progress; all the ornamental parts had to be discussed, and Florence soon became absorbed in her arrangements for Morris's settlement, and the furnishing of the house, plans for convenient baths, &c.

As the coming of age of Florence was not far distant, Mr. Bentley suggested that the formal opening of the new "Institution" should be deferred until his ward attained her majority; and for this he assigned reasons in which his niece readily acquiesced. The ceremony was to be attended by intimate friends only, as

Florence shrunk from any kind of ostentation or publicity concerning her favourite scheme. Amongst these old friends was the lady who had so much pitied and consoled with Mrs. Bentley on the "heavy charge" that was imposed upon her by the daring recklessness of her niece. This friend had now a convincing proof of what could be effected by wise and kind influence on one who had good principles early instilled into her by a wise father. She now acknowledged that the once masculine habits of Miss Wreford had been replaced by those of a sensible *gentle*-woman, and that she had not turned out, as had been predicted, a "fast young lady."

The good rector of the parish, who was an intimate friend of Mr. Bentley's, consented to preside at the opening of the "Convalescents' Home." He gave a most feeling address to the attentive audience, and as he invoked a blessing on this benevolent enterprise, he seemed to consecrate the work. The 100th Psalm was sung by the Sunday school children and the

village choir, which added to the interest, and gave solemnity to the simple service.

Morris found in every room of her new abode some useful present, as each and all of the Bentley family had contributed to furnish the place, from the master and mistress to the kitchen-maid and Willy Brown, all feeling that they could not give "Miss Florence" any greater pleasure than by showing their respect to her good nurse, whom they all esteemed. One only gift was presented to Florence on her birthday, and that was a beautiful copy of "The Lady of La Garaye,"* inscribed by Frank with a complimentary dedication. It was too acceptable to refuse, but Florence would not admit that it was appropriate.

Amongst others made happy on this occasion was Willy Brown, who received the appointment of under-gardener to the establishment at Meadowside. He was rather young for the office, but his father offered to superintend :

* By the Hon. Mrs. Norton.

time and Willy's grateful zeal would supply all deficiencies.

The guests overwhelmed the young heiress with complimentary greetings, and they talked of her "noble generosity," her "munificent endowment," "unparalleled charity." This greatly annoyed the simple-minded Florence, who hated flattery. She therefore drew her aunt aside, and entreated her to tell her friends that she was merely dispensing her father's gifts, that there was no sacrifice on her part, and therefore no generosity. "They speak to me," she said, "as if I were like the poor widow who put her whole substance into the treasury for the poor." Mrs. Bentley promised to comply with her request, and Florence was at ease.

On such occasions as the coming of age of a young heiress, the day is generally celebrated by rejoicings of a festive kind—a village feast, a ball, and fireworks. The ball was omitted because Florence could not "lead off," as dancing still gave her pain, though her joyous, generous spirit would have had pleasure in seeing others

gay and happy ; but her cousins decided against the ball. A large party of the villagers were invited to Morris's house-warming, and a party of school children came in the dusk of the evening to Heathfield to serenade Miss Wreford with "Hark, the Vesper Hymn," arranged with appropriate words, and "got up" for the occasion by the three cousins, who joined the chorus.

CHAPTER X.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

THE day after Florence came of age, her young lawyer cousin told her, with an air of assumed gravity, that she must begin to think of making her will, though he begged that she would not consider it an alarming suggestion. He was much surprised when she informed him that she had already spoken to Mr. Elton on the subject, as he was an experienced lawyer. Frank remarked, in a tone of pique, "that he begged to apologize, but perhaps Mr. Elton was a *privileged person*." With her wonted candour, Florence replied, "I will not pretend to misunderstand you, Frank ; I never mean to leave Heathfield, nor shall I ever bear the name of Elton. I am too happy here, and I like you

and Albert better than Mr. Elton ; and besides all these reasons, I am sure that he likes Milly better than he likes me.

“ When I explained to Mr. Elton my wishes relative to the property left me by my father, and now at my own disposal, he said that in the event of my death, the existing law would dispose of it exactly as I had desired to do, and that as my aunt is my nearest relative, she would inherit it all without any arrangement of mine. I need not add that I know she would secure to Morris her present abode and employment—I feel quite secure that she will do all that I could possibly desire towards everyone who has been kind to me. You seem surprised, Frank ! After all that my dear aunt has done for her orphan niece (who, if there be any good in her, it is due to your mother), could I limit, or prescribe, or ‘bequeath’ to one to whom I owe what money cannot buy ?”

Frank was silent, for his heart was moved, and he feared to speak lest his feelings should prompt him to break the compact that he had

made with his father. He rejoiced to think that the time was at hand when he need no longer conceal his tenderest hopes and wishes. He parted from his cousin, saying—

“I must tell my mother this, Florence, but she cannot love you more than she has done for a long time.”

“The Convalescents’ Home” prospered under the excellent management of Morris and her assistants. It afforded a never-ending pleasure to Florence and Emily to witness the daily improvement which fresh air and good food effected in the little town-bred children who came down weak and pale, and returned home with strengthened limbs and rosy cheeks. The two cousins found constant occupation in reading the best works on the subject they had so much at heart—the well-being of the young invalids. In giving them simple instruction, and providing amusement for them, they aided in restoring their health.

Florence by this means fulfilled her father’s wish—that she should not only give her money

but her interest and care and sympathy to children less fortunate than herself.

Albert Bentley, who had now begun to practise, was able to attend to the little patients *gratis*, which he acknowledged was most valuable experience for himself. Frank complained when he went home that Milly and Florry gave too much of their time to the "little sicklies," as he called them; but he never failed to bring them some new toy, or picture, or book. The young heiress never regretted the choice she had made of a home, and she passed at Heathfield a useful and a happy life, daily experiencing "how much more blessed it is to give than to receive."

POSTSCRIPT.

THOSE who have been interested in the foregoing account of Florence and her friends may wish to learn a little more of their future. Frank felt, when he had been called to the bar, and after he had been successful in his profession for two years, that he could honourably *compete* for the hand and heart of his cousin.

He consulted with his mother, and he told her that Florence had once said "that she should not like to change her name, nor would she ever leave Heathfield;" and therefore, before he risked a refusal he wished to know if his father would object to his taking the name of Wreford, and if he would allow him to find a home at Heathfield?

His mother assured him that his father would

raise no objection, nor place any obstacle in the way of his happiness, as he had shown so much forbearance and perseverance. "He had alone interfered to prevent any unfair advantage on one side or any mistake on the other. Florence has had an opportunity lately of judging and comparing others who have sought her favour with yourself, and if you truly love her as you ought, you must risk a refusal."

Frank thus encouraged grew bold, and he was richly rewarded by Florence's candid acknowledgment "that it was too much happiness for her to have all her wishes gratified at once. She owned that she did wish to preserve her dear father's name, and she also most earnestly desired never to be obliged to leave Heathfield." And then she added, to Frank's unspeakable delight, that "if he had asked her to go out with him to Australia, she was afraid that she could not have said No !"

These words were murmured in a very low voice, but not one syllable escaped Frank's ear ; they resounded from his heart ! He then reco-

vered his speech to thank her most warmly for this charming confession, which he valued even more than her first consent !

Mr. Elton had always admired Miss Wreford since the period of his conversation with her at Mr. Beresford's—her freedom from affectation, and her simple-mindedness had struck him forcibly. "She spoke," he said, "with the sense of a woman and the candour of a child," and he would soon have become deeply attached to her if he had not perceived, when he was a guest at Heathfield, that Frank was devoted to his cousin, and he believed that the feeling was mutual.

Mr. Elton was not long in discovering the beauty of Emily Bentley's character, and he ultimately sought for, and succeeded in gaining, her affections.

Albert Bentley took his degree, settled at Heathfield, and became the favourite physician of the neighbourhood.

Mr. Bentley gave a portion of the Heathfield estate for Mr. Elton to build a villa near them ;

and so united and happy were the three families, that their friends and neighbours called their visits to them — “*Going to the Heathfield Union!*”

THE END.

JUVENILE BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY

ROUTLEDGE, WARNE, & ROUTLEDGE.

**THREE-SHILLING-AND-SIXPENNY BOOKS
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.**

Fcap. 8vo, cloth, gilt back and sides.

George Stanley ; or, Life in the Woods.

With Illustrations.

Dogs and their Ways.

By the Rev. C. WILLIAMS. With Illustrations by
HARRISON WEIR.

Marmaduke Merry the Midshipman.

By W. H. KINGSTON. With Illustrations. Impl,
16mo.

May You Like It.

By the Rev. C. B. TAYLER. With Illustrations.

Every Little Boy's Book.

By MANY AUTHORS. With 265 Illustrations.

The Wild Man of the West.

By R. M. BALLANTYNE, Author of the "Red
Eric," etc. etc. Illustrated by ZWECKER.

Clarissa ; or, The Mervyn Inheritance.

By Miss BOWMAN, Author of "Esperanza," etc. etc.
Illustrated by PASQUIER.

3s. 6d. Books—continued.**Robinson Crusoe.**

Complete Edition. Illustrated by PHIZ.

Sandford and Merton.

Revised Edition. With Illustrations.

Evenings at Home.

Revised Edition. By Dr. AIKIN and Mrs. BAR-
BAULD. With 8 Illustrations.

Louis' School Days.

By E. J. MAY. New Edition, with Illustrations by
BIRKET FOSTER.

Uncle Tom's Cabin.

By Mrs. STOWE. With a Preface by the EARL OF
CARLISLE, and 12 Illustrations by GILBERT. Post
8vo.

Andersen's Fairy Tales.

Translated by DE CHATELAIN. Illustrated by
HENRY WARREN.

Influence.

By the Author of "A Trap to catch a Sunbeam."
Illustrated by JOHN GILBERT.

Boys at Home.

By C. ADAMS, Author of "Edgar Clifton," etc. Illus-
trated by JOHN GILBERT.

Sketches and Anecdotes of Animal Life.

By the Rev. J. G. WOOD. Illustrated by HARRISON
WEIR.

Esperanza; or, The Home of the Wanderers.

Illustrated by BIRKET FOSTER.

Old Tales for the Young.

Newly Written. Illustrated by ALFRED CROWQUILL.

3s. 6d. Books—continued.**Animal Traits and Characteristics :**

Sketches and Anecdotes of Animal Life. By the Rev.
J. G. WOOD. Illustrated by HARRISON WEIR.

Every Girl's Book :

A Compendium of Entertaining Amusements for Recreation in Home Circles. By Miss LAWFORD. With a Frontispiece by PHIZ.

The Boyhood of Great Men.

Intended as an Example to Youth. By JOHN G. EDGAR. Illustrated by BIRKET FOSTER.

The Bear-Hunters of the Rocky Mountains.

By Miss BOWMAN. Illustrated by ZWICKEN.

Guizot's (Madame) Moral Tales for Young People.

Translated by Mrs. L. BURKE. Fourth Edition.
Illustrated by O. R. CAMPBELL.

The Swiss Family Robinson ; or, Adventures on a Desert Island.

With 16 large Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT.

Edgeworth's Moral Tales.

Illustrated by JOHN ABSOLON.

Edgeworth's Parent's Assistant ; or, Stories for Children.

Illustrated by PHIZ.

Edgeworth's Popular Tales.

Illustrated by DALZIEL.

Edgeworth's Early Lessons.

Illustrated by BIRKET FOSTER.

The Castaways ; or, Adventures of a Family in the Wilds of Africa.

By Miss BOWMAN. Illustrated by HARRISON WEIR.

3s. 6d. Books—continued.**My Feathered Friends :**

Anecdotes of Bird Life. By the Rev. J. G. WOOD.
Illustrated by HARRISON WEIR.

The Young Exiles :

A Boy's Book of Adventure amongst the Wild Tribes of the North. By Miss BOWMAN. Illustrated by HARRISON WEIR.

Forest Life in Norway and Sweden.

By the Rev. H. NEWLAND. With 8 Illustrations.

The Kangaroo-Hunters; or, Adventures of a Family in the Bush and Plains of Australia.

By Miss BOWMAN. Illustrated by HARRISON WEIR.

The Wide, Wide World.

By Miss WETHERELL. Illustrated by W. HARVEY.

The Four Sisters—Patience, Humility, Hope, and Love;

Or, **The Stories of Little Patience, Robert Eyre, Ruth Benson, and Rachel Dunn.** With Illustrations by JOHN ABSOLON.

The Golden Rule :

Stories Illustrative of the Ten Commandments. By the Author of "A Trap to catch a Sunbeam." Illustrated by J. D. WATSON.

The Boy Voyagers.

By Miss BOWMAN. Illustrated by HARRISON WEIR.

Footprints of Famous Men :

Biography for Boys. By J. G. EDGAR. Illustrated by BIRKET FOSTER.

History for Boys; or, Annals of the Nations of Modern Europe.

By J. G. EDGAR. With 8 Illustrations.

3s. 6d. Books—continued.**The Boy's Own Natural History Book.**

By the Rev. J. G. WOOD. With 350 Illustrations by HARVEY.

The Lamplighter.

By Miss CUMMINS. Large type, and well-printed Edition. With Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT.

Lillieslea; or, Lost and Found.

By MARY HOWITT. Illustrated by ABSOLON.

Heroines of Domestic Life.

By Mrs. OWEN. Illustrated by J. D. WATSON.

How to Make the Best of it:

A Domestic Tale for Young Ladies. By Miss BOWMAN, Author of the "Castaways," "Exiles," etc. etc. Illustrated by ABSOLON.

Tales of Charlton School.

By the Rev. H. C. ADAMS. Illustrated by ABSOLON.

School-Boy Honour:

A Tale of Halminster College. By the Rev. H. C. ADAMS. Illustrated by JULIAN PORTER.

The Red Eric; or, The Whaler's Last Cruise.

By R. BALLANTYNE, Author of the "Wild Man of the West," etc. Illustrated by W. S. COLEMAN.

Through Life and for Life:

A Story of Discipline. By the Author of "Annie Maitland." Illustrated by J. D. WATSON.

Bush Wanderings of a Naturalist.

By an OLD BUSHMAN. With 16 Illustrations by ZWECKER, COLEMAN, etc.

Heroines of History.

By Mrs. OWEN. Illustrated by JOHN GILBERT.

**ROUTLEDGE'S THREE-AND-SIXPENNY
REWARD BOOKS.**

With 8 Illustrations, fcap. 8vo, beveled boards, with emblematical gilt side, and gilt edges.

Voyage and Venture.

Ancient Cities of the World.

Middle Ages (Great Cities of the).

Stray Leaves from Shady Places.

By MRS. CROSLAND.

The Little Whaler.

By GERSTAECKER.

Oriental Fairy Tales.

Wild Sports in the Far West.

Frank Wildman's Adventures by Sea and Land.

Edgar Clifton; or, Right and Wrong.

By ADAMS.

Hildred, the Daughter.

By MRS. N. CROSLAND.

HALF-A-CROWN REWARD BOOKS.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth extra, full gilt back.

The Rector's Daughter.

By ANNE BOWMAN, Author of "Esperanza," etc.
With Illustrations.

The Story of Cervantes:

Who was a Scholar, a Poet, a Soldier, a Slave among
the Moors, and the Author of "Don Quixote." By
AMELIA B. EDWARDS. With 6 Illustrations.

2s. 6d. Reward Books—continued.

Allen's Life of Lord Dundonald.

Eildon Manor : a Tale for Girls.

By the Author of the "Four Sisters," "The Maze of Life," etc. Illustrated by J. D. WATSON.

The Maze of Life.

By the Author of the "Four Sisters."

• **The Twins ; or, Sisterly Love :**

A Tale of the Present Day.

Arbell.

By JANE W. HOOPER.

Eda Morton and her Cousins.

By M. M. BELL.

The Lamplighter.

By Miss CUMMINS. With Illustrations by JOHN GILBERT.

Allen's Life of Nelson.

Life of Marlborough.

By M'FARLANE.

Osler's Life of Lord Exmouth.

The Play-Ground : a Boy's Book of Games.

Minna Raymond.

By the Author of "The Twins." With Illustrations by BIRKET FOSTER.

The Young Artists.

Illustrated by BIRKET FOSTER, etc.

Helena Bertram.

By the Author of the "Four Sisters." With Illustrations.

2s. 6d. Reward Books—continued.

Bible History—Genesis to Joshua.

Heroes of the Workshop, etc.

By E. L. BRIGHTWELL. With Illustrations.

Life of Napoleon Bonaparte.

With Illustrations.

Sunshine and Clouds.

By Miss BOWMAN. With Illustrations.

Life and Voyages of Columbus.

By WASHINGTON IRVING. With Portrait.

The Quadroon.

By MAYNE REID. With Illustrations.

The War Trail.

By MAYNE REID. With Illustrations.

Extraordinary Men :

Their Boyhood and Early Life. By W. RUSSELL.
Crown 8vo.

Extraordinary Women :

Their Girlhood and Early Life. By W. RUSSELL.
Crown 8vo.

Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

With Life and Notes by GEORGE OFFOR.
Illustrated by JOHN GILBERT. Crown 8vo.

The Orbs of Heaven.

The Planetary and Stellar Worlds. By O. M.
MITCHELL. Illustrated. Crown 8vo.

Walton and Cotton's Complete Angler.

By EPHEMERA. With numerous Illustrations.
Crown 8vo.

**ROUTLEDGE'S TWO-SHILLING GIFT
BOOKS.**

With Illustrations, fcap. 8vo, cloth; or, with gilt edges, 2s. 6d.

Marian and Her Pupils : a Tale for Girls.

By CHARLOTTE LANKESTER.

May Dundas ; or, The Force of Example.

By Mrs. GELDART.

The Young Painters ; or, Tales of the Studio.

With Illustrations by BOLTON.

**The Young Musicians ; or, The Sweet Power of
Music.**

With Illustrations by BOLTON.

Glimpses of our Island Home.

By Mrs. GELDART. With Illustrations.

Rosa : a Story for Girls.

Translated by Mrs. J. C. FLETCHER.

The Cherry Stones : a Tale of Charlton School.

By the Rev. H. C. ADAMS.

The First of June.

By the Rev. H. C. ADAMS.

Juvenile Tales for all Seasons.

By Miss M'INTOSH.

Conquest and Self-Conquest.

By Miss M'INTOSH.

Evenings at Donaldson Manor.

By Miss M'INTOSH.

Praise and Principle.

By Miss M'INTOSH.

Grace and Isabel.

By Miss M'INTOSH.

2s. Gift Books—continued.

Charms and Counter-Charms.

By Miss M'INTOSH.

Gertrude and Eulalie; or, School-day Friendships.

Robert and Harold; or, The Young Marooners.

Robinson the Younger; or, The New Crusoe.

Amy Carlton.

By the Author of the "Four Sisters."

Robinson Crusoe.

Complete Edition.

Laura Temple.

By ANNE BOWMAN.

Poetry of the Best Authors.

By ANNE BOWMAN.

Harry and his Homes.

By the Author of the "Four Sisters."

Violet; or, Lost and Found.

By Miss M'INTOSH.

Solitary Hunter.

By J. PALLISER.

Hills of the Shatemuc.

By WARNER.

Mabel Vaughan.

By CUMMINS.

Bundle of Sticks; or, Love and Hate.

By J. and E. KIRBY.

Hester and I; or, Beware of Worldliness.

By Mrs. MANNERS.



